BUSINESS / B1
COA uncovers P6.4B in Meralco overcharges

ACROSS / A19
Pangasinan board OKs 2 nuke plants

WORLD / A28
Top Taliban commander captured

METRO / A25
Jason Ivler arraigned on murder rap

MOTORING / B2-1
8 tips to save on fuel

It's now law: Seniors get 20% discount

SENIOR CITIZENS CAN NOW STRETCH their cash a little further. A P150 value meal, for example, at an international fast food chain would cost them only P120.

This after President Macapagal-Arroyo affixed her signature yesterday to the Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010 (Exsc), or Republic Act No. 9994, a law that will benefit some five million elderly Filipinos in the form of discounts on certain goods and services.

"The President has signed the bill."

(TO KNOW) A20

Bishop: Religious leaders lord over pols, confuse God

By Leila B. Salaverria

WITH SO MANY CANDIdates seeking the blessings of religious leaders who say they speak in His name, God must be having fun but is also

BISHOP A10

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Wednesday, February 17, 2010 ★★ 8 sections / Vol. 23 / No. 71 P18

PCCI FORUM Presidential candidates Manny Villar, Eddie Villanueva, Gilbert Teodoro, Richard Gordon, Joseph Estrada and Noynoy Aquino face another round of grilling in a forum sponsored by the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry at the Marriott Hotel in Pasay City on Tuesday. Again expressing his view that the forum moderator is biased for Manny Villar makes for an engaging sideshow.

Globe, PLDT fear attacks

Noynoy annoyed by moderator's bias for Villar

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE SNIPING BETWEEN SEN. BENIGno Aquino III and the moderator of a presidential forum was one of the few highlights in a staid debate sponsored by the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI).

Aquino, Liberal Party standard-bearer, could not hide his irritation at the remarks made by journalist Antonio Lopez that he wished the forum had a "more unbiased moderator."

Lopez's bias appeared to be for Aquino's main rival, Sen. Manuel Villar.

The forum was sponsored by the PCCI at the Marriott Hotel, across from Terminal 3 of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport in Pasay City.

In his introduction, Lopez described Villar, Nacionalista Party standard-bearer, as a "self-made tycoon, former

NOYNOY A18

'Time for GMA to speak up on Morong 43'

By Michael Lim Ubac and Nancy C. Carvajal

THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SHOULD speak up.

President Macapagal-Arroyo was yesterday assailed for her continuing silence on the two doctors and 43 other health workers detained at a military camp who were taken at gunpoint by state forces from a training seminar in Morong, Bataan.

Sen. Loren Legarda, vice presidential candidate of the Nacionalista Party (NP), said the President should use her powers as Commander in Chief of the

TIME FOR A6

FANCY MEETING YOU HERE NP standard-bearer Manny Villar (right) warmly greets Rep. Nikki Teodoro, wife of Gilbert Teodoro, administration presidential candidate, during the PCCI forum.

Want to back out as election data centers

By Christine O. Avendaño

YET ANOTHER HITCH IN THE MAY 10 AUTOmated elections?

Fearing physical or technical attacks, Globe Telecom yesterday proposed to withdraw its offer to host the main data center that would transmit the election results of the May 10 polls on its premises in Makati City.

Expressing similar apprehensions, Philippine Long Distance Company (PLDT) also attempted to get out of its previous offer to set up a "backup" data center in its Makati offices.

Instead, both Globe and PLDT proposed alternative sites to host the servers of the Commission on Elections (Comelec). The new sites would be inspected today and it would be announced later if the locations would meet standards for the secure transmission of poll results.

Comelec Chair Jose Melo said the new sites offered by the two firms in Clark, Pampanga, "did not measure up to the standards."

Smartmatic-TIM later found that PLDT Clark and Globe CoreClark "did not comply with the technical/infrastructure specifications."

PLDT was offering just "a small office" while Globe CoreClark lacked "the required re-

GLOBE A6

RP-MILF peace talks put off over drafts' differences

By TJ Burgonio in Manila and Ryan D. Rosauro in Cotabato City

PEACE TALKS BETWEEN THE government and the secessionist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) have been put off on the latter's request because of the wide disparity between the two camps' draft agreements.

The MILF sought the postponement of the talks that were to have resumed tomorrow "to give us time to review the [government's] draft," MILF panel chair Mohagher Iqbal yesterday told the Inquirer in Manila by phone. "The difference between our draft and the government's is too big."

GOP'S HELP A20

Divers find whale shark with fins, tail sliced off

By Marvah Erika Lozaba
Inquirer Southern Luzon
and Alcuin Papa

BATANGAS CITY—A DEAD WHALE shark without fins and a tail was buried on the shores of Tingloy Island on Tuesday morning, foiling a sad epilogue to a Manila conference of 50 nations for the protection of the endangered fish species.

Locally known as "butanding," the juvenile whale shark (Rhincodon typus) was found at 9:30 a.m. on Monday by a group of foreign and local divers in Barangay Mariveles on the island, 44 kilometers from this city.

It was still alive but "very weak" when the group left it at 5 p.m., said Boy Mundo, head of the Barangay Dagat Isca patrol) in Tingloy.

Mundo said the whale shark, measuring 18 feet, could have gotten accidentally entangled in a net laid out by a group of island fishermen who were catching fish nearby.

They must have tried to rescue the creature with their bare hands but could not do so without cutting its fins and tail, he said.

Since it could no longer swim, the hapless giant fish was placed in cool waters with Barangay Dagat personnel watching over it, Mundo said. Unfortunately, it died on Monday night and

DIVERS A20

Ali Baba is gone, but thieves still around, thriving

By Fernando del Mundo
Chief, I-Team

(Third of a series)

THE LATE JAIME CARDINAL SIN FAmously said after the ouster of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos in the 1986 People Power revolution that while Filipinos had driven out Ali Baba, the 40 thieves remained.

The crooks not only stayed, they multiplied. It is a problem the new president certainly will have to address.

Today, the perception is widespread that corruption pervades every level of Philippine society.

This is evident from the anarchy in the streets, abetted by policemen who turn a blind eye to traffic infractions for a fee, to wheeling and dealing in the corridors of power.

The cost boggles the mind.

The World Bank, in a study in 2004, pegged estimates from the Philippine Commission on Audit (COA) in 2001 that a whopping $4 billion—roughly P200 billion—had been lost annually to corruption.

Badly needed funds to lift the nation from chronic poverty go to individual

ALIBABA A10

WEATHER FORECAST

TODAY: Intense thunderstorm over southern parts; cloudy with scattered showers elsewhere. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated thunderstorms. (Forecast issued at 4 a.m.)

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Cotabato	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Partly Cloudy
Dagupan	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Naga	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Catarman	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy

Second FRONTPAGE

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2 P's: 4 25 / 27 27 / 7 5

SUERTRES: 4 8 4 / 0 7 6 / 3 3 3

6/6 LOTTO: 5 9 3 1 4 5

6/45 LUZ-VIS-MIN: 2 12 19 22 29 35 — P10,060,649.20

SUPER LOTTO 6/49: 19 20 26 27 36 38 — P16,000,000.00

Comelec to shuffle 'Garci Boys'

By Christine O. Avendaño

MORE THAN 50 FIELD PERSONNEL OF THE Commission on Elections (Comelec), including five with alleged links to ex-Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano of "Hello Garci" fame, will be reassigned before the May 10 polls.

Comelec Chair Jose Melo yesterday told the Joint Oversight Committee on the Automated Election System the reshuffle was not only overdue but was being done to "remove any suspicion, any familiarity" by the elections officers in their current posts.

Senator Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. raised apprehensions at the hearing about the "Garci Boys" still being "in positions of influence in various parts of the country, holding official duties that would impact on the elections."

Voice on tape

"I want to have an assurance that this won't be so," Pimentel said.

Garcillano's son said to be the voice caught on tape talking to President Macapagal-Arroyo in 2004 about a one-million vote margin for her.

Mr Arroyo apologized on national TV for talking to (a poll official)—a violation of the election

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MANUEL S. ENVERGA UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION

Lucena City, Philippines

Foundation Anniversary

Feb. 16 - 19, 2010

Manuel S. Enverga University Foundation: Flying High @ 63

The Manuel S. Enverga University Foundation is an Autonomous University from March 13, 2009 to March 13, 2014 by virtue of CHED Resolution No. 206-2009. Since it was founded sixty-three years ago, the University has graduated some 40,500 professionals who are participants in the building of a great Filipino nation, actively in the pursuit of the national development goals, enhancing the national heritage, and applying solutions to problems of contemporary Philippine society. Starting with 102 students in the summer of 1947, Enverga University has 13,750 students in five campuses in Lucena City, Candelaria, Catanauan, San Antonio and Sampaloc. The academic programs in the tertiary level are accredited by the PACUCOA, with the Liberal Arts programs passing Level IV, the first ever in the country.

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The MSEUF Board of Trustees. *(Seated L-R) Atty. Jose S. Lourdes, President Ruste E. Leverza, Chairman Wilfredo L. Enverga, Dr. Cesar A. Hilarides, VP for Administration Jasmin L. Enverga, and VP for Academic Affairs Dr. Bernilda N. Villenas. (Standing L-R) Atty. Diego G. Ticanlia, VP for External Affairs Dr. Jose G. Arienza, Jr., Atty. Carlito D. Enverga, Cong. Mark M. Enverga, Mr. Michael F. Villanueva and Dr. Teresor E. Leverza*

Middle: President Ruste E. Leverza receives the certificate for Manuel S. Enverga University after having been identified as an Autonomous University from President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo at the Rizal Hall. Welcoming Palace are CHED Chairman Emmanuel F. Angeles (extreme left).

Right: VP for Academic Affairs Dr. Bernilda N. Villenas and Dean Fernandina A. Lugsanan (extreme right) show off the Certificate of the College of Criminology and Law Enforcement as Center of Development.

MANUEL S. ENVERGA UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION

Foundation Anniversary Celebration

Schedule of Activities

DATE	EVENTS	TIME	VENUE
Feb. 16, 2010	Thanksgiving Mass	8:30 am	University Gym
	[illegible]	10:30 am	Vicente Libery Alumni Center
	Ms. Enverga University 2010	6:00 pm	University Gym
Feb. 17, 2010	NROTC Loyalty Parade	8:00 am	Carousel Court
	[illegible]	9:30 am	University Library
	Organization Day (Amazing Race)	8:30 am	City Proper
	Ronyaldo S. Bolano Drama Festival	8:30 am	AEC Little Theater
	Degree Academic Quiz Bee	1:00 pm	University Gym
	Shakespearean Sonnet Recital	1:30 pm	St. Bonaventure Center
	Digital Poster Making Contest	3:00 pm	Library Seminar Hall
	Trade Fair	3:30 pm	[illegible]
Feb. 18, 2010	Blood Donation	8:00 am	MSEUF Campus
	[illegible]	8:00 am	EMRC Main
	Battle of the Bands	5:00 pm	University Gymnasium
Feb. 19, 2010	Grand Ballade (Final Rounds)	8:00 am	AEC Little Theater
	Cultural Contests	1:00 pm	University Gymnasium

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Bautista stays as Marina chief

By Dona Pazzibugan

FORMER TRANSPORTATION ENGINEERING Undersecretary Elena Bautista remains an administrator of the Maritime Industry Authority (Marina), a spokesperson of the Supreme Court clarified Tuesday.

Court spokesperson Midas Marquez said what the high court ruled to be unconstitutional was Bautista's previous appointment as Marina officer-in-charge.

The Supreme Court said such an appointment violated the constitutional prohibition against dual or multiple powers, until position nine of the nine Bautista was concurrently undersecretary of the Department of Transportation and Communication.

"What the Court nullified was her appointment as OIC. But since she's been given a regular appointment (as Marina administrator) and since she's relinquished her post as undersecretary, she can continue as the Marina administrator," Marquez said in a news conference Tuesday.

Mitra appeals

PALAWAN REP. MERIANDO BAGUE MITRA has appealed the Commission on Election's decision to disqualify him in the May 10 gubernatorial race, saying it would practically make his lone opponent the winner.

Mitra, in his motion for reconsideration filed Monday afternoon, said he was elated of due process when the First Division disqualified him as a guilty-turned candidate based on the complaint of Antonio Gonzales and Orlando Hilbay Jr.

With him out of the race, Mitra said it would make an election useless in Palawan as it would render his opponent, Jose Alvarez, without opposition, he said.

Mitra, of the Liberal Party, failed to establish the one-year residency in Aborlan, Palawan, the Comelec First Div. reasoned. *Richard A. Reyes*

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Red Cross on 'Morong 43' case to better prison conditions

By DJ Yap

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF the Red Cross (ICRC) yesterday said it was looking into the case of the 43 health workers arrested in Morong, Rizal, in the hope of changing Philippine prison conditions on a broad scale.

Jean-Daniel Tauxe, head of the ICRC delegation in the Philippines, said assistance had been made to gain access to the health workers in Camp Capinpin, on an avail.

"We will keep trying," he said at a media briefing in Mandaluyong City.

Tauxe said that being nonpolitical, the ICRC would work quietly and would not make its findings public.

Should they be barred access to the health workers, "that's the only moment the ICRC will go public," he said.

Otherwise, he said, the ICRC would lower it to other agencies to go to the media, and would instead concentrate on finding solutions and convincing authorities to observe humanitarian laws in prisons and jails nationwide.

"The Morong case is a famous case, but there are so many detainees that do not go to the media," Tauxe said.

"The ICRC is not political. We don't [act] as judges. We try to improve the conditions of detainees, and for those in jail, it makes a lot of difference," he said.

According to Tauxe, the ICRC used the same strategy in helping facilitate the release from prison of South African leader Nelson Mandela in 1990.

'Time for GMA to speak up'

Front page A1

armed forces to get to the bottom of the charges of sexual molestation and torture of the so-called "Morong 43" leveled at members of the Army's 2nd Infantry Division.

The soldiers are headquartered at Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal, where the 43 health workers have been held since Feb. 6 on suspicion of membership in the communist New People's Army (NPA).

Political harassment

"As Commander in Chief and proclaimed champion of women's rights, the President should look into [these charges]," Legarda, the lawmaker added in the Arroyo Supreme Corps, told the heroes in uniform in service.

She said the issue was close to her heart as she had been pushing for the protection of barangay and community health workers.

"We cannot tolerate the fact that they are being harassed politically when they reach out [to people] in the hinterlands. We don't have adequate and quality health care in the rural areas, and we owe it to the community health workers who provide those services," Legarda said.

But she stressed that "due process must be [observed]."

"And that's for both the volunteer workers, whom the military suspects of being members of the NPA, and the soldiers, whom one of the female detainees has accused of touching her private parts, as well as those of her companions," she said.

Pressure to deny

One of the detained health workers is Jane Ballaran, a granddaughter of the late congressman and labor leader Crispin Beltran.

According to Jane's mother, Ofelia Beltran-Ballaran, her daughter whispered that she [silenced] reached her and the other female detainees' private parts while they were in the toilet.

Jane Ballaran subsequently denied the incident report, but the mother said at a press conference yesterday that she was standing by her statement that the female detainees were sexually abused by their jailers.

"I understand her retraction. Her superior right besides her, and there was pressure to deny it," the mother said in a mix of Filipino and English.

Legarda said "it's time" Mr. Arroyo stepped in "because human rights violations were reportedly committed, and a mother has said that her daughter was abused."

"If there's a human rights violation, it must be proven and the culprits brought to justice," she said.

She also reported Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita's statement that an investigation was not necessary because the allegations were mere propaganda by leftist groups.

The senator, a former broadcaster, said her political rivals would probably accuse her of speaking out on the issue "because I'm running for the vice presidency."

"But remember that I was also a full-time journalist before I entered politics. We just want to get to the truth in this issue without anyone violating anyone else's rights," she said.

'Not lying'

At the press conference in Quezon City, Ofelia Ballaran said she was "not lying or misquoted" regarding the sexual abuse of her daughter.

"I stand by the statements I made in a newspaper that my daughter has been a victim of sexual abuse in detention," she declared, adding that Jane had suicidal [two sisters] about her ordeal.

Ballaran said her daughter told her about the abuse during her first visit on Feb. 9, when the detainees' lie were allowed to stay for five minutes, and repeated it on Feb. 10, when they were allowed to stay a little longer.

She said her daughter was not an NPA member, and that she understood why the latter denied the purported sexual molestation.

The mother added that Jane's military escort, in whom she was handcuffed, took her to restroom covering the bathroom corpus fearing to cause a denial.

"I understand her. I could feel that she was afraid of retaliation because she is still under military custody. But I stand by my statement that she and the other detainees were sexually tortured," Beltran said.

The Supreme Court had earlier issued a writ of habeas corpus for the Morong 43 in response to a petition filed by their kin. It ordered the military to present the detainees to the Court of Appeals on Feb. 23, but it was only on Feb. 15 that the military did so.

Repeated ordeal

Holding back tears, Ballaran said her daughter explained the ordeal she had to go through every time she used the toilet to handcuffs.

"Someone pulls her underwear down, washes her private parts, and pulls the underwear up again. My daughter found it very degrading and humiliating," she said.

The Army has denied the charge of sexual molestation, and said only female soldiers or personnel were assigned to guard and assist female detainees, especially in using the toilet.

But Ballaran said the gender of the soldier-escort did not matter.

She said that "since Lira children] were three years old, they have been trained to do their [ablutions] in private."

"It was necessary for Jane to have someone present in her private moments," she said. "I maintain that it's not normal to have someone else watch you in the toilet, particularly if it's against your will."

Ballaran said Jane had apologized to her for the dentist.

She said her daughter was suffering from the prolonged and repeated interrogations.

Ofelia also announced that a case against the military would be filed with the Commission on Human Rights in behalf of her daughter and the other female detainees.

"Those responsible should be held accountable," she said.

Counseling needed

Gabriela Representatives Liza Maza and Luz Ilagan, who were present at the press conference, also denounced the purported sexual abuse and called for the immediate release of the 43 health workers.

Ilagan said the health workers, especially the women, now needed psychological counseling.

"We can only imagine the mental and emotional torments the detained female health workers go through every minute they are held captive, knowing the historical and institutionalized notoriety of the military in abusing political captives," Ilagan said.

Maza, a senatorial candidate of the NP, said: "Sexual abuse as form of torture is a serious allegation that warrants an immediate and impartial investigation. It is extremely disturbing to think of what the victims, most especially the women, have to go through day by day in the presence of their tormentors."

"It is wrong for the military to issue a statement that the sexual abuse did not take place. It should be investigated based on the statement of the victim, not the suspect."

'Bounty-hunting'

Another senatorial candidate, Akbayan "Dr. Bolilyn" Ramos of the Liberal Party, condemned the arrest of the 43 health workers and said doctors were required to help anyone in need.

"Should a doctor be arrested and declared for treating 'communists'? What will rank our ranks as physicians, we swore to care for all humanity," Ramos said.

"I cannot accept the idea of 43 civilians being hauled into a camp by a hundred-strong army of armed soldiers. They may be accused of being dissidents, but where proper protocol ended and blatant disregard of human rights began is what alarms me," he said.

Bayan-Muna said the arrests resembled "the indiscriminate of heroes-hunting."

"As a doctor, I cannot imagine being accused of such a grave offense when the nature of my profession requires unusual providing medical attention and saving people's lives, regardless of their political leanings," he said. With reports from Philip C. Tubeza

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3 lawyers recant on PCGG land deal

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THREE LAWYERS WHO REvealed a purported deal between the government and an alleged crony of former President Ferdinand Marcos to sell a sequestered prime property in Pasay City to property developer SM Development Corp. are taking back their words.

In a pleading submitted to the Sandiganbayan assigned court yesterday, lawyers Ruben Madrid, Peter Paul Dumas and Mario Carullo said that their earlier "conclusions of facts and law are palpably based on superficialities, personal opinions, speculations and inferences."

Crying foul over the alleged misjudgment of their foes as former lawyers of alleged Marcos crony Peter Sabido, the three had earlier told the Sandiganbayan that Sabido and the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) had entered into an agreement with SMDC to sell a convenient Pi1.1billion property at Diokno Corner for only P330 million.

They had described the alleged deal as "highly plunderous, debunks both the government and undersigned counsel of their clear, and affords SMDC highly unwarranted benefits via reduced costs and tax evasion."

Misinterpreted

In a joint motion they submitted to the court, the PCGG and Sabido admitted that they had misunderstood an agreement to sell a sequestered company and its prime property to Pasay City for P1.28 million, but they identified the buyer as Consolidated Prime Development Corp.

Yesterday, Madrid, Dumas and Carullo withdrew their earlier statements and asked the court to remove their previous pleadings from the case record.

"Upon deeper recollection and assessment of the relevant facts and circumstances, it now appears that undersigned counsel may have misperceived, misappreciated and/or misinterpreted the foundations and premises of their diverging lies and admissions," they said.

This was in stark contrast to their earlier pleading in which they asked the court to "fully scrutinize, dissect and/or strike down for being in fraud of the government and undersigned counsel any purported settlement" over the subject property.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Wednesday, February 17, 2010
Ash Wednesday

1st Reading: JOEL 2:12-18
2nd Reading: 2 COR 5:20-6:2
Gospel: MT 6:1-6, 16-18

Jesus said to his disciples, "Be careful not to make a show of your righteousness before people. If you do so, you do not gain anything from your Father in heaven. When you give something to the poor, do not have it announced before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets in order to be praised by the people. I assure you, they have been already paid in full.

"If you give something to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your gift remains really secret. Your Father who sees what is hidden will reward you.

"When you pray, do not be like those who want to be seen. They love to stand and pray in the synagogues or on street corners for others to see them. I assure you, they have already been paid in full. When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father who is with you in secret; and your Father who sees what is kept secret will reward you.

"When you fast, do not put on a miserable face as do the hypocrites. They put on a gloomy face, so people can see they are fasting. I tell you this: they have been paid in full already. When you fast, wash your face and make yourself look cheerful, because you are not fasting for appearances or for people, but for your Father who cares for and appreciates you. And your Father, who sees what is kept secret will reward you."

Commentary:
"And your Father, who sees what you do in private, will reward you."
The spiritual life is meant to be
an adventure between the soul and God.
It is not an act of religious
playacting in front of the world
in order to impress the world.
It is, instead, the deepest relationship in life,
the one in which to be seen - meaning of life depends.

Lawyers call automation 'very dangerous experiment'

By Kristine L. Alave

THE INTEGRATED BAR OF THE Philippines (IBP) and the Legal Network for Truthful Elections (Linetel) yesterday said delays in preparations could put in jeopardy the country's first automated national elections.

"While there is no dispute that the automated elections will expedite the counting of votes, there is also a danger that if it is not properly handled, it could lead to massive fraud as paralleled in Philippine history," said Rose Liboro, IBP executive vice president.

Liboro called the assessment of the May 10 elections "a very dangerous experiment."

"The failure of the Comelec (Commission on Elections) are practically full in light of the very limited timeframe for the preparations," he said.

The IBP and Linet yesterday signed an agreement to provide legal advice to poll watchdogs on election day.

'Not enough time to vote'

The two groups said they were concerned over poor mock election reports that the voting could take as much as 22 hours for a precinct with 1,000 registered voters.

Since the precincts will only be open for 11 hours, "there would be disenfranchisement of about 50 percent, if we use the results of the mock polls," Liboro said.

"There is a need to adopt now a contingency plan to prevent the massive disenfranchisement of voters, including a failure of elections," he added.

Watchdog Kontra Daya, which observed the mock elections in Quezon City on Feb. 6, said it took one voter five to six minutes to vote.

At this rate, there may not be enough time to allow 1,000 voters per precinct to vote from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. on May 10. If 50 voters will need 330 minutes to vote, that would mean 36 hours for 1,000 people to vote," the group said.

More legal questions

The Comelec has yet to release the contingency plans for a failure of elections and the procedure for electoral complaints before a proclamation, worrying the lawyers.

Lawyers Josue Escusa, Jr. and Lorna Patajo-Kapunan, who

Payatas rally for Kapatiran

By Jaymee Arong

PROMISING NOT to neglect the poorest of the poor, the candidates of Ang Kapatiran led by standard-bearer Jejomar Binay and senatorial candidate Jejomar "JC" de los Reyes held their presidential campaign rally in Quezon City's Payatas district, where the notorious but largest garbage dumpsite loomed.

"Government has to be returned to the people. Elected officials are servants of the people," De los Reyes told reporters, by way of explaining the rally's theme, "Binay's Mix, Bawiin Mo Ulit Your Government Bulilitin Ito."

Held in the covered court at Lupang Pangako, Payatas II, the rally began at around 3 p.m. and was going on at press time.

Some 3,000 party supporters and Payatas residents were in attendance.

De los Reyes, an incumbent Olongapo City councilor, his running mate Dominador Ouano, and their eight-member senatorial slate were introduced one by one and gave brief speeches.

Running for the Senate are social activist Rizalito David, retired fighter pilot Divine Tarrosa, Councilor Reginald Tamayo of Apayao, Cagayan, former United Nations executive Manuel Baldemor, and lawyers Jo Imbong, Tomas Jesus Rivales, Ma. Gracia Ribaya-Plaza and Sabino Sinco.

"Each of our candidate has a story to tell. The party screened them based on their qualifications and principles," De los Reyes said in an earlier interview.

The program began with Catholic, Protestant, Muslim and Indigenous people's prayer services.

The candidates took oath of a proclamation in Tagalog challenging residents of poor barangays like Payatas to lead in social and political reform.

Kapatiran appeals for donations

ANG KAPATIRAN Party has launched an appeal for donations to support its candidates in the May 10 elections.

In a statement, Sindy Pacheco, the party's founder, said:

"We, in Ang Kapatiran Party believe that our candidates should not be saddled with the burden of having to raise their own campaign funds for the following reasons: a) we want our candidates to maintain their integrity; b) we do not want them to be beholden to anyone or any vested interest groups; and c) we want them to remain focused more on moral principles than personal interest, and more on the pursuit of the common good than the demands of special interests. For that reason, Ang Kapatiran has established the Pondo contra sa Tingas (Fund against Traditional Politicians)."

For dollar deposits:

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Swift Code: BOPIPHMM

Ayala, Libis, Quezon City Branch (+632) 4312202

For peso deposits:

Bank: Bank of the Philippine Islands

Account Name: Ang Kapatiran Alliance for the Common Good

Account No.: CA# 4288-0045-48

Swift Money: BPI1.2378203

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For online donations see Pilvicard.

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Noynoy annoyed by moderator's bias for Villar

From page A1

Speaker and Senate President, and former Palace Press Secretary, probably?

Lopez also lamented over Aquino's cousin, Cebu Rep. Emmanuel Emilio "Eman" Lopez II, whom he reportedly pointed as a bar topnotcher.

Unimpressed

By contrast, Lopez was unimpressed by his introduction of Aquino, calling him a man with a good pedigree, grandson of a national hero, son of national heroes—former President (Corazon) Aquino and (slain opposition) Sen. Benigno Aquino—congressman for nine years, and senator for three years.

"He will tell us what he is going to do," Lopez said.

Lopez added that Aquino was somebody known for his "strong instincts." He called Aquino's cousin, former President Joseph Estrada "a man of action."

Pro-Villar articles

After the forum, Aquino said he had no doubt who the moderators were in favoring Villar," he said.

Aquino showed reprints of Lopez's articles heaping lavish praise on Villar. Lopez is BizNewsAsia publisher and president.

Aquino did not take too kindly being caught by surprise by Lopez who changed the order of the candidates quoting with their answers.

When Aquino complained that Lopez reversed the order of candidates giving their answers, the latter said: "A leader should be ready for surprises."

RELATIVELY SPEAKING Liberal Party presidential candidate Noynoy Aquino (left) shakes hands with cousin and Cebu Rep. Eman Lopez (CNC standard-bearer Gilbert Teodoro during a forum sponsored by the PCCI. ERIC CAMPOS

Unfriendly moderator

In which Aquino shot back: "Hopefully if the moderator is unbiased like you."

"I just hope there was parity. But I'm OK with that. It's good to have yourself go through a test in an environment with no unfriendly moderators," Aquino said after the forum.

The Liberal Party presidential candidate noted that Lopez had been against him and his family since the burial of his father in 1983. (Ninoy Aquino was assassinated at the tarmac of Manila's international airport upon his arrival from exile. The killing triggered massive protests that led to the downfall of Marcos.)

The question-and-answer largely set the budget deficit, mining, energy, poverty reform, the Inter said. "A leader and government policy.

Lack of managerial ability

Villar indirectly took aim at Aquino's lack of leadership, managerial ability and experience" in implementing a platform of government.

The Nacionalista Party standard-bearer asked businessmen if they would leave their respective posts to intervene who they did not trust would do the job.

Villar also asked whether the businessmen would let the same person run government which, he said, was a thousand times more difficult than managing a corporation.

Investor confidence

For his part, Aquino promised of his agenda in combating corruption which he believed was the key to creating investor confidence in the economy.

INSPIRATION Aug Kapatiran presidential candidate Jc de los Reyes (right) and running mate Dominador Chipeco (standing, back) greet and give the youngest residents of Barangay Payatas in Quezon City on Tuesday. (See story on Page A9.) RAFA GIL-OBRERO

Aquino, who described corruption as "theft and a form of murder by a thousand cuts," promised to stamp down on the "mafia."

"We know who are and where the law either is unable (because of) or reluctant from the enforcement to enforce against the untouchables. We know who the smugglers and the tax evaders are. We know who the kidnapping and bank robbery syndicates are, too. With your help, we will take them down," he said.

Whistle-blowers

Aquino said his administration would welcome whistle-blowers and give them sanctuary.

Both Aquino and Villar refused to name their prospective Cabinet appointees.

Teodoro said he would retain Health Secretary Esperanza Cabral and Trade Secretary Jesus Ferrin.

Eddie Villanueva, Bangon Pilipinas standard-bearer, said he would appoint two former environmentalists (claiming environmentalists—Carlos Fabian and Soliman Mutasal.

Estrada said he would bring back to Malacañang Executive Cabinet that served in his abbreviated presidency from middle of 2000 to January 2001. "They are all very competent," he said.

Sen. Dick Gordon, Bagumbayan standard-bearer, did not name names, but gave assurances..."management, honest and intelligent."

Not like MBC

In his opening speech, Estrada lashed the PCCI for not proposing its influence on the government "unlike other groups," apparently referring to the Makati Business Club (MBC).

He partly blamed the MBC for his ouster some years ago.

Estrada said he would repeal the agreement on the privatization National Power Corp. and abolish redundant government agencies.

At the open forum, Estrada made reference to his experience as a former president. "Obviously he will pressure me. I have already done," he said.

With a report from Fe Zamora

Ali Baba is gone, but thieves still around, thriving, multiplying

From page A1

pockets instead of public service, heaping the power of the poor severely marginalized and without access to education and health care.

The business sector, in particular, has also been wary of the problem.

Most corrupt gov't agencies

A survey conducted by Social Weather Stations (SWS) in 2006 in Metro Manila, Cebu and Davao cities showed that seven out of 10 companies reported having been asked for a bribe, a record high since 2005.

The eighth such survey by SWS since 2000 also found that public perception of the malaise had not improved, with three in five seeing "a lot" of corruption.

It also found that "feelings that the government is not winning against corruption" were "weakening" and that "feelings of efficacy in fighting corruption" among managers "declined a bit."

The Bureau of Internal Revenue, Bureau of Customs and the Congress and Public Works and Highways were identified as the most corrupt agencies.

PP highly corrupt

Transparency International, a global civil society organization, placed the Philippines' corruption perception index at 2.8 in its 2009 CPI table. This ranks countries on a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 10 (clean). Out of 180 countries, the Philippines is ranked 139th, tied with Suriname, Bangladesh and Burkina Faso. Thailand is No. 1 in the list, perceived to be least corrupt.

Malacañang has, time and again, downplayed these survey results as mere "perceptions."

Peter Wallace, an Australian businessman and longtime Philippine resident, says corruption is either No. 1 or in the top three concerns in every business survey.

"I am working with a company at the moment to get a government contract. The same was true when I was at the Philatelic Trust Club commanding a magnificent view of Makati City.

"They are not going to pay a bribe to get it...so the problem is not them, it's somebody else they are competing against...not only here in the Philippines, but other countries. That's why corruption is such a big issue," he says.

2 types of corruption

Government economists say there are two types of corruption bedeviling the Philippines. One involves expenditures and the other government revenues.

The first is revealed in the various reasons funneling the Arroyo administration. (See *In The Know* on this page.)

Systemic corruption—stringalong, tax evasion and undervaluation, system of goods coming into the country...is much more pervasive.

Former Sen. Ralph Recto, who had served as socioeconomic planning secretary and is seeking reelection in the May 10 balloting, points as an example of corporate corruption to a GSIS report in 2008.

The GSIS says $49 billion in funds disbursed in 2007—an election year—to local government units (LGUs), foundations and public organizations remain unaccounted for.

The report says that P16.49 billion of these funds went to state agencies—of which P17.45 billion went to the Department of Agriculture. The departments had been top to its cocktails in this P7.26-million facilities scandal in 2004.

LGUs got P16.56 billion and foundations and public organizations received P7.45 billion.

Recto says it is possible the funds went to projects, but that the records are later been burned. "There is an system of tracking," he laments.

Graft democratized

Before the 1986 Edsa People Power Revolution, there was only one reputed thief in the country that Cardinal Sin referred to. Marcos gained notoriety as one of the world's top kleptocrats that included the late Mobutu Sese Seko of the Democratic Republic of Congo, present Indonesian Suharto, and Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe.

Today, there are thousands of such thieves after the late President Corazon Aquino ordered that acceptance of public works projects should be signed by barangays, mayors, governors and congressmen.

Up to 30 percent of the cost of projects which are subject to bidding and solicitations by national agencies goes to kickbacks, according to local and provincial officials.

"With democracy, corruption was democratized," says an economist.

In a study funded by the Asia Foundation and the US Agency for International Development, Transparent Accountable Governance (TAG) puts traditional (journalistic) system of governance" as the context in which corrupt and collusive practices have been deeply entrenched.

Whistle-blowers pronounced

"Influenced by extensive patronage networks, the bureaucracy tends to circumvent and undermine formal rules and laws for too much discretion," TAG says, adding that instead of rewarding it, the "sophisticated culture of corruption" even hunts those exposing inveterate behavior.

"Individuals or companies that speak out against corrupt behavior face negative treatment from government agencies. The institutional mechanisms for monitoring and reducing corruption are weak," it notes.

Witness-protection Act to

IN THE KNOW: No stranger to scandals

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo is no stranger to corruption scandals.

Many of the controversies still have to be settled.

The most recent came to his Malacañang was the controversial $329 million National Broadband Network (NBN) deal with China's ZTE Corp in 2007.

Businessman Jose de Venecia, a leading bidder who blew the whistle on the deal, said that the contract was overpriced by $130 million to cover kickbacks to Arroyo, Neri and involved First Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo.

Widespread indignation prompted Ms Arroyo to scuttle the deal to save the nation's businessmen.

In November last year, a Senate panel that investigated the controversy said that Ms Arroyo was "answerable" for the deal, but the 16th Congress adjourned early this month without the plenary approving its report, effectively consigning the case to the archives.

The first scandal to hit the Arroyo administration broke out in 2003, when Sen. Panfilo Lacson accused the President's husband of amassing more than P200 million from anti-jueteng contributions and putting the money in secret bank accounts, some under the name of "Jose Pidal."

Mike Arroyo's brother, Ignacio, claimed he owned the P1-dal account but invoked his right to privacy. In 2004, Malacañang bailed at the re-opening of the account probe, pointing to "issues of dual loyalty."

Also in 2004, Lacson revealed a fertilizer fund scam just weeks before the presidential elections.

He accused Ms Arroyo of "vitiated vote-buying," stating she authorized the release of P728 million in funneled officials to buy fertilizers and pesticides for their constituents even though it was farmer owners. The Commission on Audit said the chemicals were overpriced by 462 percent or P128 million.

After an investigation, the Senate blue ribbon committee recommended the filing of plunder and other charges against Agriculture Undersecretary Jocelyn Bolante and nine others, who all denied the charges.

Also in 2004, controversy shrouded the $500-million Hello Garci fraud scandal project, which calls for diesel-powered trains in many passengers from Caloocan City to Batolos, was described by former Sen. Franklin Drilon as "the greatest train robbery in history."

In 2005, a Senator leaving board Secretary Heidi Mendoza of the illegal numbers game "jueteng," which led to the downfall of Ms Arroyo's predecessor Joseph Estrada, that Mike Arroyo, his son Juan Miguel and brother Iggy had been receiving payments money from jueteng. The Arroyos denied the accusations.

The biggest scandal of the Arroyo administration was "Hello Garci." In 2005, tapes were released purportedly featuring Ms Arroyo talking to Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano about rigging the results of the 2004 election.

Ms Arroyo later practically admitted the voice on the phone with Garcillano—who she apologized for her "lapse in judgment." The scandal spawned the first of many impeachment cases filed against her, none of which prospered.

In late 2007, after a breakfast in Malacañang with the President, more than 100 congressmen and around 200 local officials were given paper bags containing between P200,000 and P500,000. Critics said the money was intended for his election campaign. More complaints against Ms Arroyo, Bids Problems, Inquirer Research

itself in the absence of clear and credible guidelines on campaign spending and contributions ... [members] exemption to office and the vicarious interests for future campaigns and contacts, or to recoup huge expenditures raised from one's own pockets or by third parties," they say.

Professor Ricardo M. Morallos of the UP Department of Political Science says is another study that the presidency itself is an important feature of the "biggest prize out" that breeds corruption in the country.

"The vast powers enjoyed by the Philippine president to appoint and bestow contracts should be carefully reviewed in the effort to reform the overall sociopolitical environment that fosters corruption," he says.

Clarita Carlos, the first civilian graduate of the National Defense College of the Philippines, says the 1.5 million-strong bureaucracy no longer matches the requirements of society.

"That bureaucracy is really corrupt or not even most transactions have to move many steps at not," she says. "The best crafted policy will not find meaning if the bureaucracy will compromise it. The corruption that we see all around now has pervaded the bureaucracy. So a step or reason has not been introduced."

Where are we going?

Carlos recalls a survey several years ago conducted among graduates of the University of the Philippines in Diliman.

Majority of those children of democracy—those born after 1986—wanted to join either the Bureau of Customs or the Bureau of Internal Revenue upon graduation, she says.

"If UP students are in that mainstream, if they no longer represent the noble and the good, supposedly, then where is our country going?" Carlos asks.

"There are very young people, in the graduate, wanting to go into institutions where they can get rich quickly. Because that is what we are demonstrating, that it does not pay to work hard. It does not pay to be honest."

When, even, salaries/bloomers are honorable, many Filipinos are in trouble, she says. "There is where the limbs of the requirements for transparency, accountability and the rule of law will have to come in." *With Sam Pedroso, Inquirer Research*

Water media painting contest in Baguio

THE FIRST ON-THE-SPOT water media painting competition to celebrate the Baguio centennial will be held on Feb. 20 at the ecological sanctuary at 208 Nirun Road, Tam-awan, Pinsao, Proper, Baguio City.

Dubbed "Pine & Bamboo, Bamboo & Pine," the contest will be held at 8:00 a.m.-4 p.m. It is sponsored by the Baguio Japanese Society and Cordillera News Agency.

The contest aims to raise awareness on the Cordillera's natural heritage and culture. It is divided into two categories—professional (for those who have had at least one solo visual arts show) and amateur (for students, hobbyists and tourists).

The artists (Filipino or foreign residents) of more at least 12 years old may use any water-based media (watercolors, watercolor pencils, ink, acrylic).

Materials may be the artwork is 22" x 15", horizontal or vertical.

To reserve a slot for the contest, call or text 0919-4893562 or e-mail babelfishbaguio@gmail.com.

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• On Security Screenings at Airports:

Flights (outbound)	921,495
Passengers (departing international & domestic)	217,988,156
Cargoes (outbound)	487,601,309 kilos
Baggage	187,781,205 pieces

• On Issuance of Certificates of Compliance to Ports and Ships

Statements of Compliance of a Port Facility (SCPF)	599
International Ship Security Certificates (ISSC)	865
National Ship Security Certificates (NSSC)	568

• On Conduct of and Attendance to Trainings/ Workshops/ Conferences

Foreign	37
Local	179

• Others:

- Conducted 1,961 Surveys, Inspections and Audits in airports, port facilities, ships, rail transportation and bus stations/facilities
- Gathered 3,500 information from the Intelligence Community and shared 900 Intelligence Reports with concerned agencies
- Drafted 19 Transportation Security Regulations, 11 of which have been approved by DOTC for implementation
- Launched program for the deployment of ITTS accredited K-9 to augment security tools in our airports, seaports and mail & rail stations.

These operational activities were supported by the following resources:

• Personnel Strength

Performing Administrative Duties	121
Security Screening Officers (SSOs)	852
Total	973

• Logistics

X-Ray Machines	46
Walk-Thru Metal Detectors	41
Hand-Held Metal Detectors	91
Operational Test Items	20

Currently, the OTS is pushing for the approval of the Philippine Transportation Security Authority Bill (PTSA), which will make OTS the *"single administrative authority for the implementation of a comprehensive transportation security system, in full compliance with international standards and practices, in order to stamp out terrorism, economic sabotage and all forms of unlawful interference that breach integrity and security of international and national transportation systems".*

The OTS is committed to continue performing with professionalism its mandate of safeguarding the nation's transportation systems for the security of the travelling public.

In appreciation for its six [6] productive years, the OTS officers and staff celebrated its founding anniversary last January 28, 2010 at OTS main office in Pasay City.

On February 17, 2010, the Office will also tender cocktails for the DOTC family and partners at the Tower Club in Makati City.

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INQUIRER Vol. 33 No. 71

OPINION

The Morong 43

EDITORIAL

THE MILITARY POINTS TO SOME OF THE detained health workers raising clenched fists as proof that it rounded up anti-government activists. But this is a country that has decriminalized belonging to the Communist Party of the Philippines and what's more, all the military has done is make allegations about the political orientations of its detainees.

Those detained by the Armed Forces of the Philippines say they are health workers and even the AFP doesn't really dispute this, except to add that it suspects the detainees of engaging in more than public health. The health workers say they were taking part in a health seminar when they were arrested; the military says they were caught in the act of making explosives. Again, this remains to be proven in a civilian court of law.

The Hippocratic Oath requires doctors to attend to all patients, regardless of color, creed or political affiliation. Just as every citizen has the freedom to adopt a political affiliation, ideology in turn is not a bar to providing health care nor should it even be a factor in determining the sincerity of a person engaged in health care. Last Sunday Chair Leila de Lima of the Commission on Human Rights was denied access to the detainees.

In the meantime, inquest proceedings were begun, but the detainees claim they were denied counsel. Eventually, De Lima was allowed access to the detained health workers, and she told the media the military treated the detainees with all the finesse of Guantanamo prison: "They are continuously handcuffed and blindfolded... they are not allowed to sleep, somebody else feeds food into their mouths, even when they urinate—somebody else pulls down their underwear." She clarified that she found no signs of physical abuse. Jose Ballesca, one of the detainees, told the press, "They treated me okay. [However] there were instances that we were threatened and pressured." And the detainees allege prolonged interrogations and being held incommunicado.

Republic Act 9745 or the Anti-Torture Act, which dates to Nov. 10, 2009, defines the crime of torture as "an act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for the purpose of obtaining a confession...among other things."

The problem with the military's torture case so-called is that its handling of the whole thing has raised alarm and put the AFP on a collision course with the courts. What is undisputed is the manner in which the military has responded to official inquiries and judicial proceedings: with a sweeping, dangerous sense of impunity. It was hostile to the Commission on Human Rights, and when instructed to produce the detainees in response to a habeas corpus petition, it defied the courts as free.

The AFP, which had cracks and manpower aplenty to arrest the health workers, put forward lame arguments similar to the one it gave De Lima: it feared a rescue attempt by communist rebels and so preferred to keep the detainees away from public view. It doesn't help that civilian officials like Assistant Solicitor General Renan Ramos told the Court of Appeals, "The security considerations outweigh the sentiments of the detainees," in response to the detainees' counsel being denied access to their lawyers.

There is a famous dictum that "when the guns speak, the law falls silent." This is the implied threat in the current, dismissive, behavior of the military top brass and the source of so much public concern and alarm.

Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Victor Ibrado, in the light of public alarm, responded by gently rapping his subordinates on the knuckles. He reminded the AFP in general, but no one in particular, that everyone should comply with the instructions of the court. What happened to command responsibility? It isn't the entire Armed Forces, but specific military officers, who now risk being charged with violations of the Anti-Torture Law? Even if the military previously had a case, by its intransigence and demonstrations of impunity, it is rapidly losing any moral ascendancy it might have once tried to claim.

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Comelec keeps changing its mind

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

WHAT'S THE HURRY WITH THE COMMISSION on Elections? It keeps changing its mind. Now we sense one first ruling, that media must have to take a leave of absence from their media outfits if they are endorsing or campaigning for a candidate. But it has made a complete turnaround. It said they don't have to take a leave of absence and left it to the media outfits' management to make their policemen take a leave or not. Naturally the networks will not want the men of their ruling thrones to go on leave even when they are making a mockery of elections laws.

The wording of the last Election Act is very clear: "Any mass media columnist, commentator, announcer, reporter, on-air correspondent or personality who is a candidate for any elective office or is a campaign volunteer for or employed or retained in any capacity by any candidate or political party shall be deemed resigned, if so required by their employers, or shall take a leave of absence from his/her work at each during the campaign period.

"Provided, that any media practitioner who is an official of a political party or a member of the campaign staff of a candidate or political party shall not use his/her time or space in favor of any candidate or political party."

The Senate Electoral Council for Responsible Voting (SPEAK) and Comelec law department head Nestorfranz Rabonza are correct in holding the strict interpretation of the provision. But the Comelec en banc favored the very liberal interpretation. Its liberal that it practically eviscerated itself and its office created by the Fair Election Act.

In the first place, the law was passed to level the playing field. It is no secret that rich candidates have an unfair advantage over the poorer ones, thus denying the latter the chance to get into public service. They have more money to buy commercials and advertisements and hire more campaigners to distribute them. In 2007 alone, according to rumors, P40 million to the cost of a star comedian. That is why the law limits the amount of commercials and advertisements each candidate can buy during the campaign period.

Curiously, the Comelec did not include the commercials and ads aired and published before the campaign period when, as everybody can see, they already run into billions of pesos. The excuse: they were aired before the campaign period and therefore were not yet unlawful in the prohibition. A technicality that anybody with a common sense can see clearly runs into the spirit of the Fair Election Act.

For a candidate who acquired billions of pesos in real estate development can spend 100 times the limit set by the law and still get away with it because he spent most of it before the campaign period.

Even in deciding election cases, the Comelec cannot make up its mind. After declaring Arroyo in Pampanga as the winner in the 2004 gubernatorial election in Pampanga and Jun Jun Binay the loser, and after the decision had become final and executory and Binay had been duly taken his oath of office as governor, the Comelec made another turnaround and said, "The wrong is made clear, we have to hold another hearing." Meanwhile time is running out. The term will be over in four months. The winner will be left holding an empty bag, only a few days or weeks left before the term ends. The loser has held the position for almost the whole term, collecting all the salaries and allowances that rightfully belong to the winner. The loser actually were because of the decision of the Comelec. The loser, therefore, not only the election winner but also the entire citizen because of a rarely Comelec. You would think that because time is running out on the terms of office, the Comelec would act faster.

The tactic of all election losers is to delay the resolution of cases so that the winners would be left with very little time to occupy their positions. And the Comelec, as well as the courts and the other tribunals, are very liberal in allowing losers to delay cases against them.

Such behavior encourages cheating in future elections. Even if one is caught cheating, it would take almost the whole term to finish the case. So even if the cheater is unseated in the end, the winner gains almost nothing. By the time the winner is able to claim his seat, only a few days are left of the term.

To discourage cheating, I suggest that a law be passed providing that when an election case is filed against a proclaimed candidate, and a preliminary investigation shows that there is a prima facie case against him, all the salaries and emoluments of the office, including pork barrel, if there be any, he is to earn, to be given to whoever is declared the rightful winner in the end. It would discourage cheating if the cheater would get nothing for his trouble in the end.

* * *

The poll campaign in Makati must be getting more acute and the camps of the rivals of Erwin Gonzales for the mayoralty must be getting more desperate. During a rally of supporters at Barangay Guadalupe Viejo during the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe a few days ago, guess bashful sisters and brothers at people attending the rally at least five children and an elderly woman were injured. They were brought to the Makati Medical Center for treatment.

Suddenly a gambling-mouthing Bagong at incumbent Vice Mayor Ernesto Mercado or at Councilor Junjun Binay, the circle of conspirators, but they should police their rabid supporters.

And the Makati police, where were they? Some of evidently organized serving a couple of mobile patrol units from the Makati police force at the site of the incident and yet no arrests were made.

Transformational

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THE TURNOUT IN THE LAST 10 ELECTIONS was remarkable, one of the truly remarkable features of this remarkable election. The youth in particular went out in droves, determined to make themselves heard. Many registered their votes early to avoid the crunch on E-Day, which came as expected.

Much of that phenomenon owed to Barack Obama being seen as a "transformational" candidate, as Celso Brandt put it, which captured perfectly not just Obama's image but the manner of the election as a whole: It was about changing. It was about transforming. It was about the despair that was and the hope that could be.

Of course it was also about Obama the candidate. It was also about health care; it was also about "socialism"—as the Republicans depicted Obama's New Deal–type plan to bring the US out of the recession—vs. "rugged capitalism." It was also about the war in Iraq. It was about Obama's awesome oratorical skills, which had Time Magazine crying the CEOs of corporations ought to take lessons from him (rather than from some guy named Brahe) on how to sell friends and influence people. It was about Obama handling the debates masterfully, if not masterfully, giving the voters the confidence to rejoin the reins of government in his hands. It was about Sarah Palin, who made a fool of herself and made the voters see that the GOP was an extension of George W. Bush in more ways than one.

But it was more than that. It was much, much more than that. It was about someone who had come from far afield, an unpopulist candidate or an unlikely carrier of the Ring like Frodo, who had gone on to beat the Great White Hope in Hillary Clinton, to become the presumptive president of the United States of America. It was about the son of someone who, as Obama himself would point out during his inauguration speech, 60 years ago would not have been admitted to a fancy restaurant other than to serve the fine dinning during, during the side to command the magnificent army were assembled on this earth. It was about a country that proclaimed itself the most democratic country in the world and had invaded other nations in its name, but which kept an entire people in bondage on the strength of their color, finally having the potential to live up to its pretensions.

In all his speeches, in all his appearances, in all that he said and said, Obama never made Americans forget that.

If that election had only been Obama the unifying, team would not have walked up in the eyes of Oprah Winfrey and Jesse Jackson as Obama stepped out of the stage to realize that—no matter Hillary's desire to represent. If that election had only been about Obama the man, the youth would not have tumbled out like Attila's hordes to overrun the enemy's camp. If that election had only been about Obama the candidate, Obama would not have won.

We have the same problem today.

Of course this election is also about the candidates. It is also about personal qualities and leadership abilities. It is also about poverty and education, and peace and order. It is also about how well the candidates answer questions in debates. Although Gus Lee was here down in the US, if supplying brilliant answers to debates meant the world here, Kris would never have become president, it is also how many volunteers you have against how many billions your opponent has, and whether democracy will win out against money or not, in this and. It is also about how many entertainers and popular personalities you can get to say how utterly trustworthy you are notwithstanding that your very attempt to buy the election itself contradicts it.

But it is more than that. It is much, much more than that, it is about a regime of tyranny that has sacred apathy and cynicism and hopelessness to bowel upon the land like sting the way sacred law did not too long ago and the hope, the glimmer, the possibility of ending it. It is about an engagement whose true meaning, like the snap elections of 1986, is not real. It is to choose a new president you know the regime will cheat then and you know the regime will cheat now), a thing that can never drive the people, the youth in particular, to spill out like birds's leaders to storm the enemy's camp, but a struggle to bring new life to the nation. It is about the People and their Power, which took the form then of taking to the streets to oust a tyranny, and which can take the form now of taking to the polls to oust a tyranny.

I don't know why we haven't been reminded of that at every turn.

One attractive today is the arena as when Cory ran against Marcos in the snap elections and when Obama ran against Bush Jrs. not John McCain) in the last American election. It is a time when people are caught in the dark and cannot find their way. What they need is a torch, not a map of the Philippines. It is a time when people are desperate and need something to hope. What they need is to be inspired, not to be given a tourist brochure. It is a time when people stand on the brink of life and death, of more of the same or a bit of breathing space or downright grace. What they need is a chance to liberate themselves, not a chance to choose between Gaspate and Close-up.

Let me make a prediction.

The presidential candidate who can inspire will win this election. The presidential candidate who can put the sun and show the divide between the despair that is and the hope that can be will win this election.

The one who cannot will not.

Who will be the evil genius?

ANALYSIS

Armando Doronila

IN ANOTHER ELECTION SO EVENT FOR from on Monday, six of the seven presidential candidates present regretted their common concern over a failed election due to mechanical difficulties in the automation of the experimental voting system.

Their opinions were belied by uncertainties over the preparations of the Commission on Elections to install the automated apparatus by May 10, election day and overshadowed their individual differences over political issues and platforms. The six were: Gilbert Teodoro Jr., the administration candidate; Senate President Manuel Villar; Senator Aquino III, Justice Madrigal and Richard Gordon, Senator Perlas, and Sen. Nikki Villanueva. This time, they were joined in a chorus on the theme of failed election. If there was no backing of Sen. Manuel Villar, as some of these pilloried him at the forum, as opinionated lecturer at the University of the Philippines, it was because Villar did not defend Estrada President Joseph Estrada, who was also invited, did not attend the forum either. Estrada has developed the habit of non-appearance in public debates, but the public may have lost nothing due to his absence in terms of enlightenment.

Estrada's absence from the Comelec-Management Review as the standard-bearer of the Lakas-NUCD party coalition Dalisay-CMD Rampil distanced himself further from the President's apparent reluctance by not taking that time about her legacy in economic and infrastructure achievements. He highlighted the issues with Estrada, especially the bias and untold compromise his effort to improve his rating in the surveys. The President did him a favor by staying away from the launch of his campaign.

But the forum, Teodoro singled out the "big legitimacy problem" in underlining the computerization nationwide of the election count, saying, "The integrity of the elections is vital. ... administration is fine but the way it is implemented, I would have my doubts." He noted that the last batch of computerized counting machines would be delivered only in the last week of February, and then the machines would only have one running session in March.

Teodoro was more confident that the Comelec could put the system in place. "I cannot see a situation where it will fail because that will create anarchy in the country," he said. "I don't think the government can stand a failure of elections."

Loudest had been voices from this contingency does not happen, because if honest elections fails, either due to mechanical "glitches" or to manipulation of the machines, this government, as well as Gordon himself and the other presidential candidates, will never survive the insurrection over a stolen election. Edsa would then look like a picnic. If this happened, we better be ready to say good bye to elections.

Perlas, representing civil society de-genders, warned that "there is strong possibility of an electronic fiasco." He was referring to the tampering of the 2004 election results in Mindanao by the then Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano, as revealed in a taped conversation with President Arroyo. The President admitted it was her voice that was heard on the phone, but denied she instructed Garcillano to cheat to let her win. Although there was no evidence to prove that the balloting was tampered, still, her intervention triggered widespread demands for her resignation, a number of military coup attempts and Cabinet resignations. It also sent a dark cloud on the legitimacy of her government from 2005, and this question of legitimacy hounded her presidency relentlessly.

Perlas named the winning of recipient of the fascist economic, saying that the "probability to terminate every day" for cheating facilitated by electronic devices. He said, "What will happen is that there may be an election but there will be failure of election." To insert teeth to failure, he said there was a need for a manual count fallback option, parallel to the electronic count system—a proposal supported by Madrigal and many others.

The flaw in the "electronic fiasco" argument is that it does not say who would be the person in charge of the automated count during balloting in 2010. In 2004, it was President Arroyo from whom Garcillano allegedly took instructions. Who will be the Gort this time to receive the orders?

The clear beneficiary of the 2004 election was Mr. Arroyo, who won only a second term, or an elected president. She is running for Congress in a safe electorate, the second district of Pampanga, where she is expected to win hands down.

There's no compelling need to steal the elections by rigging the count—natural cunning was alumny of the Comelec. No one among Aquino, Villar, Teodoro, Madrigal, Gordon, Sen. Villanueva, Perlas, and De los Reyes is in a position of authority to have access to the Comelec's facilities in order to rig the balloting. Comelec Chair Jose Melo will have no part in the scheme, and will not follow them. Who will benefit from the fiasco? Only Mr. Arroyo.

None of the above would like to be a president whose legitimacy is compromised by election cheating. The problem with the second count scenario is that there is no villain at the center of the plot or a puppet master. The central figure behind the election—the evil genius, or the queen bee—is not there. Her term—remains unidentified. What happened in 2004 cannot be replicated in 2010. Who cannot remove the central cast of 2004. They are unique in our electoral history.

Manay Gina's turn

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

PERHAPS SO "NEOPHYTE" IN POLITICS (she's now had a longer, better preparation for the field than "Manay" Edsa de Wilstock, candidate for congressman in the fourth district of Pangasinan.

Asked what her campaign slogan is, Manay Gina replies promptly: "It's 'Iba Ito Dito'...(may Manay Gina sa, mga Manang ina pa)" (Gina got Manay Gina along with Manang Ina?)" Manang Ina is of course, Ina de Venecia, former speaker of the House of Representatives, named in 2008 after he expressed support for his son Jose Velo's himself running for the Senate) in the 2010 elections. Velo is running on the ticket of the Arroyo administration loyalists, Manang Ina had been Speaker for an unprecedented five terms, but because of the ongoing cauldron-like situation among the administration's allies, she opted to step aside and sing the House with unwavering efficiency pushing through legislation favorable to whatever administration was in power. (It was for president in 1998 but lost to Erap Estrada, and relinquished back to politics running his 1st district seat in the Speakership in 2001).

In all these years, starting with Manang Ina's first term in 1987 (1987, 1990, 1993, 1998, 2001), Gina has been practically the House's "forever secretary." The daughter of "Ina" Jose Velo, Reyes of Sampaguita Pictures, a major movie studio in the 1950s and 1960s, Gina was brought up in the midst of movie stars and their fans, long inured to adulation and attention. She was also known to remember names and faces, the trait that this Manay Gina is blessed with charm and warmth, skilled in making and renewing friendships.

ADVERTISEMENT

IBP rejuvenated, the will of a former congressman, leads her campaign with a slogan along the lines of "let's try something new" "But the people tell me that they don't want someone 'new,'" says Manay Gina, recalling how she was persuaded to run by constituents who didn't want the Bo Venecias to abandon them.

Manay Gina came up her platform in one word, four, "I" for livelihood, "O" for overall health and nutrition, "T" for tourism, and "H" for which she says should provide every livelihood program for the folks in the district, and "I" for education and the environment, citing how Baguio City and the towns of Mangaldan, Manaoag, San Fabian and San Jacinto had been devastated by floods caused by typhoon Ondoy.

In a recent party to mark her birthday, Manay Gina was dazed in a deep backyard, while her campaign staff and team members danced. Lolong with Manay Gina's face on them. "This is it's sons," Manay Gina explains, referring to her three teenage daughter who perished in a fire a few days before Christmas in 2000. Maybe this campaign is one that has been providentially ordained as from that devastating tragedy as Manay Gina says she is "excited to try this new field."

SIDEBAR: the staff members at the party was a group of women who had lost children, members of an organization they have called "Ina," for being Nanay-ing an Anak (Mothers who have Lost Children). The group was formed in the outings death of Mayor Jun Abalos in 2007's parents. To day "Ina," which is also the Filipino word for "mother," has a vision for healing at the IDYLL compound, and has reached out to hundreds of other mothers in similar situations.

Manay Gina's deep concern for spearheading the conservation of "Ulomon," temporary shelters for women survivors of domestic violence and for the outcome of serious abuse while she was head of the Congressional Commission on Women, (CCW). In fact, we learn Bhenog Joe that he has remained drawn to fill should he ever head the CDH.

Then again, if Manay Gina wins, she will still be a "neophyte," a first termer and, according to tradition, no matter how experienced the House Speaker he will be, come to think of it, President Arroyo who is running for congressman in Pampanga. Those campaigning to make 1986 Speaker are either defending themselves and the public or angling for a share of the President's residual power—if she loses.

RISK: something we can all do at our heads—and hearts—rape from all the hype and bangle of the election process. A friend suggests this exercise as a way of quieting the confusion that all the political noise has created, while harnessing the collective power of our prayers. This is what our friend Karen suggests:

"As we start our campaign, here's something we may want to do.

"That is to pray or do a 'heart meditation' for seven minutes every night at 8 p.m. One by one, we will send love and light to our leaders, detractors and change in our country towards goodness and light. In the heart meditation, we focus on the heart and let it radiate peace, love, justice, truth. (We imagine these radiating colors and they become our candles.)

"Then we think of the people we want to send these to. Our collective positive thoughts will be a powerful force. It will be a force against evil and will be manifested here."

"Eight seconds is supposed to be the equivalent time for the Philippines.

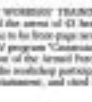
"I think that's also when we do the Earth Hour.)

"Of course we will continue to work like mad campaigning for Sec-Mar and our senators, and guarding our votes.

"But it seems all our prayers for 'this Cory evolved consultant' in life's continuing praying and for the 'this Cory evolved consultant.'

It must be fairly obvious who Karen is referring to, but even supporters of other candidates would do well to embark on this "heart meditation" (another Karen suggestion) after letting all "negative" thoughts and feelings from one's head and heart while doing the prayers, and visualizing all that "goodness and light" radiating from one's heart and joining those hands, already there or coming in the morning together and creating a powerful force for a better future. Worth trying, don't you think?

Barefoot doctors



PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

THE DAY ON A HEALTH WORKERS' TRAINING WORKshop in Marong, Basil, and the arena of G health professionals and worker's comme to be front-page news.

The other night on the TV program "Cassmash," Lt. Col. Noel Detoyato, spokesperson of the Armed Forces' bad leftists Dionisio, noted that the workshop participants generally had low educational attainment, and cited this as one reason why they were suspected as subversives. Detoyato even enumerated the participants' ed. scotland profile: 3 had elementary level, 5 had high school graduation, 3 had college education and 4 were college graduates. He then mentioned that one of the participants had only finished first grade, and that this person was wanted for murder.

The colonel's revelations reflect society's prejudice against people who have had little formal education. "Uneducated" means ignorant, unfit, unconscious of the external and the subconscious. Moreover, in this case of the health workers, there is the insinuation that the "uneducated" (read the poor) couldn't become health workers.

Yet for nearly half a century now, there has been a great global revolution going on, where people with minimal education have become excellent community health workers. In the Philippines, this initiative dates back to the early 1970s, when Filipino health professionals put up community-based health programs (CBHP) with community health worker (CHW) training as its centerpiece.

The Filipino CBHPs drew inspiration from China's barefoot doctors, one which built upwards from the communes and villages. The barefoot doctors of Chairman Mao were the training of bamboo doctors, so-called because many had minimal formal education. He, with training of six months to a year the bamboo doctors could handle many of the most important health needs in their villages. Some eventually went on to medical school. One of them, Chen Zhu, rose through the ranks to become minister of health.

The Chinese system of barefoot doctors caught the interest of governments and NGOs throughout the world. The John Hopkins Center in the United States translated a hefty Chinese book, "The Barefoot Doctors Manual," into English and published it, with many copies sold in American bookstores. I sometimes suspect it ended up in many health manuals with all the information it contained.

Promoting health

In many Latin American countries, there were programs for promotores de salud (health promoters). Like the term selfhelp emphasis on preventive health rather than the curative. So in China, the promotores de salud were often villagers with only a few months of training.

In Mexico, an American biologist, David Werner, began his own primary health care program and produced "Where to Say Doctor," which included his own wonderful illustrations of peasants performing all kinds of medical procedures. The manual was translated into many languages (sadly, the Philippines was not among them). Another manual, "Where There is No Doctor" as well as a Tagalog translation, "Kung Iisa Walang Doktor." (I still remember that one of David's illustrations had to be modified for the Philippine version of his book: an unconscious person in the book, following the Mexican norm, had to be redrawn according to Filipino standards.)

The Filipino CBHPs were handled by NGOs, many affiliated with Roman Catholic and Protestant social action programs and serving very remote communities. I was part of these CBHPs and participated in many of the training workshops. Yes, those being trained were often barely literate. But I found that this was a boon. It was because of literacy I could become an advantage. Because they could barely read or write, the health workers learned mainly by attention watching and apprenticeship.

In 1978 the World Health Organization endorsed primary health care as a global strategy with the ambitious target "Health for All by the Year 2000." Many governments, including our own, adopted the rhetoric and at one point the Department of Health claimed that it had trained some 100,000 barangay health workers (BHWs) throughout the country. I also participated in some of these training sessions. They tended to be quite basic, with large groups of BHWs learning from a few health professionals over two to three days of lectures on first aid and basic health care.

The NGOs, in contrast, had longer and much more intensive training with additional workshops for more advanced skills. Following the spirit of the Alma Ata declaration, health workers also learned to organize and mobilize communities for health. That organizing component was not contained session with paranoid military and government officials, who couldn't understand that the "public" in "public health" means social mobilization, for example, methods learning where the health centers are and what services are available.

When China initiated economic reform and its modernization campaign, it abolished the communes, together with the barefoot doctor training. The ethnicity they used was that of putting shoes on the barefoot doctors. But almost 30 years of an increasingly commercialized health care system has brought many problems and there is talk about restoring elements of the primary health care system.

Caregivers

In the Philippines, the NGO CBHPs continued, health workers remaining active even in places where CBHPs had been phased out. A few years ago while teaching to a group of municipal health officers, one of them told me some of her best health workers were those trained by our CBHPs more than 20 years before.

Over the last decade, we have seen another phenomenon: that of caregivers' training, a six-month course with many similarities to the barefoot doctors or community health workers' curriculum. Sadly, the main goal of such training programs is to produce Filipino caregivers for export.

We should look into formalizing the caregiver curriculum as a vocational course, with a shift in emphasis toward meeting local needs. They could work with families having special medical needs, or with communities, clinics, hospitals, retirement villages, and, let's not forget, military camps.

Call them barefoot doctors, CHWs, BHWs, or caregivers, the point is to train more people to take the country's health literacy levels, deliver health services and, most importantly, organize people to take care of their own health needs.

On the ABC program, Detoyato also mentioned that one of the arrested health workers was a "retired teacher," again as if to prove the health workers were spurious. Really now, age, sex, educational attainment, religion and yes, even ideological affiliation, should never disqualify someone from becoming a health worker. The only eligibility for such health workers should be a commitment to serve.

Comments are welcome at mcomp@inquirer.com.ph.

Heavy spending on political ads; so who's pro-poor?

LETTERS

BILLIONS OF PESOS ARE BEING SPENT by politicians and political parties for their ads and infomercials. These ads consume our country's time and the same money—a promise of a better life for the poor. Although their message is about combating poverty in our country the irony—which is also a cruel reality—is that not even a centavo of those billions of pesos being spent for political ads is being used to improve the lives of the poor. The money is but gone to the bank accounts of very rich people in our society to advertise the owners of ABS-CBN, GMA-7, ABC-5, taxpayers and large radio networks.

Can something be done so that the poor can at least have a slice of that huge chunk of money being spent for ads and infomercials promising a better life for the poor?

The media cash a lot from political ads during election periods while entire shows only every odd-numbered years. In other words, every midterm there are the media owners and operators as they are in fact operating, profitably. The income from the ads is therefore income that the networks can do without—or else it was a "bonus" income. Thus bring the ratio of its harm would be inflicted on the media if Congress would enact a law that would require the networks or resist at least 10 percent of their income from political ads to a "national fund" created for the purpose of fighting poverty in our country. This fund should be managed by a foundation, not a government agency, to shield the fund from corrupt politicians and government officials. The foundation shall have officials who are highly respected in our society, with the money the foundation could then embark on livelihood projects, scholarships, health care, and other initiatives to improve the lives of the poor.

—ERNESTO ACAD, erako_adao@yahoo.com

'Money' talks

"MONEY" TRANSFORMS VILLAR'S OMG pedigree still be fodder for unrelenting canvassers for many years to come. Put what it is other than a perfectly natural extrapolating seemingly attended to "finding another chore." It would be interesting to dissect how many millions of pesos he has to spend for every down point that he is gaining. Right now, because of his charismatic, postulation spending, he is a "top-of-the-ticket" product, which is the reason he is casting favor with the voters. That is also the reason why is whatever conditioning the public mind. Sadly, in advertising, which is what the Villar spent are, the line between truth and claims gets blurred in the frequency of airing. And with "Money" Villar's cash, claims and "true" message can be turned into "truth." It certainly doesn't mean that Villar is the right person for the presidency it only means that the highly paid advertising team that did those commercials are very, very good. That certainly doesn't bother and the money dwell product (Villar) is paying them.

However, history-wise, should learn this early than the presidency is won (like those that dampening songs or whitening lotion, which they can point when they are dissatisfied with the result.

Villar, as he has shown through his recently attitude toward the white, is not being raised against him and for numerous rewards his press, will be no different from Gibb, Eigel-Ejido.

The people celebrating him? We said Idelfonso Delphis, harbinger raising Villar's campaign. Our attendees are the rural, high-maintenance families to level. Willie Revillame, he only cosmetic money from about Same Down. pa rin! Lito Atienza? From out that they have sold out to Villar. Only the cynic pays that "Money" keeps, and I thought all along they were opposing needed and gender equality in this hell pandemic of government.

So newest engine! Let the bravo (in Villar's advertising campaign), the worst Senator. Was sure for him because you are swayed by his barrage of strategic and well-crafted advertising, then are truly truly deserve the "leader" we are getting. Just like GMA's immoral, unless presidency, malaise or current says as anything months. The time, because of our own doing.

—JOCELYN GONZALES, jgonzalesww78@yahoo.com

MACDONALDITES Party-presidential candidate Manny Villar with Willie Revillame, host of the popular noontime show Wowowee

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Why Villar caught up with Aquino in surveys

THE SIFTERS TO AMADO DOROMAL column titled "End of Aquino's free ride," (Oct. 02/04/10) the stated that "The latest Pulse Asia survey reveals significant end of the free ride of Aquino or the wave of public sympathy and nostalgia following the death of his mother, President Corazon Aquino last August.

...Aquino is being forced by a shift in the public mood to intensify his campaign strategy and focus on what he can do as the country's next leadership change or an income government." I would like to make certain comments on the issues.

I believe that Villar is in a position to catch up with Aquino for the following reasons: 1) Aquino is campaigning for good governance under the slogan "Tuwid na daan" (be strait). Ironically, Lahat ng mali, Lahat ng galaw." While Villar who is campaigning for economic progress, jobs and personal evaluation has the slogan "Si Manny Villar ang magtatanggal ng kahirapan." The latest Jan 31-16 Pulse Asia survey showed that Aquino has an advantage by 11 percent among the rich and 6 percent among the middle class, while Villar has an advantage by 14 percent among the poor. This indicates that a lot the poor voters who are easily swayed by Villar's full blast campaign ads, 2) Based on self-rated poverty, more or less than 10 percent of the voters are poor who are more inclined to rely on campaign politics, and 3) Living standard measures and poverty incidence are but to understand that poverty can be established through assessment of consumption and political stability. Thus, the Villar camp has taken an early ride on the weakness of the poor by appealing to their existence while Aquino campaigns consider on appeal to their conscience.

Therefore, Aquino's campaign strategy should include informing the voters of the truth of "falling millions of Filipinos from poverty" given the 6-year term of the presidency and recent dramatic increase deficit of the economy as evidenced by the following statistics: 1) revenue, employment and call center industries have been mentioned as the major drivers of economic growth but it employs only those who are at least post-secondary graduates starting only 30 percent of the total labor force, 2) the government's 2010 budget has the following features: agriculture allocation is P4.7 billion lower than that of 2009 budget, budget deficit to reach P600 billion, and more than 20 percent to be budget debt payments, 3) investment performance is also weak as it is lower than other neighboring countries; and 4) import is higher than export which is even true for agricultural products and it is the 29th dollar consumption rate are used in the underserve of trade deficit.

Given the recent social realities, Aquino should tell what the issue Presidents should do in the field of combating poverty and inequality. History has shown that honest government gives hope to the poor but giving false hope will only tighten the shackles of hopelessness and poverty of the people.

—EDMUNDO ENDOZO, edendozo@yahoo.com

MILF coddling of 'Ampatuan fugitives' alarming

PO PERO IT QUITE DISTURBING TO HEAR that 400 fully armed members of the Ampatuan family have defected and were conscripted into the military force of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. This is decidedly alarming because this happened while the negotiator front is talking with the Philippine government for peace settlement. What is not clear is how can an incident like this happened. We remember that when the last round of the Philippine negotiating panel, Eduardo Ermita, was crafting a peace agreement with the MILF in Kuala Lumpur, most of the top members of the MILF left the room of the talks to enter an unlawful diplomacy with some unarmed gunmanners from North Korea.

This recent development is not just another act of treachery, it is even worse because not only has the MILF acquired the sophisticated arms and armaments from the Ampatuan army of the Ampatuan clan, it has conveniently added many bodies to its ranks here.

These new recruits can be trained into savage fighters as they were rumored in the Ampatuan to fill military interests. They have no choice to speak of, and no discipline either. While many of them are Muslim they are completely devoted to the teachings of their Islamic faith.

Needless to say, the government peacekeeping force should not give their attention a chance to adapt on them. It is important that, should the MILF provide these savages mercenary and soldier forces, the government must take a decisive action to deal with them immediately in any Philippine territory. It is quite intriguing that the government allows members of the MILF to leave abroad within the territories they currently occupy despite the ceasefire which some of its ground forces had committed, and it is even more troubling now that the MILF has opened its camps and land about the real cause for support to Ampatuan massacre.

The development does not augur well for the peace talks as it indicates that the MILF is not preparing for a transition to peace but is in fact gearing up for another round of war. We hope that our perception is wrong since the incidents appear on the heading toward a terrifying and renewed conflict.

—ENA DE JESUS, Rosary Heights, Cotabato City, ena_de_jesus@yahoo.com

LWUA ACCOMPLISHMENT REPORT CY 2009

PURSUING PGMA'S VISION OF WATER FOR ALL
(ESPECIALLY THE WATERLESS)

The nine years of the PGMA administration have seen dramatic, profound and steady gains in the government's provincial water supply development program. Those gains have become even more intensified and pronounced following the initiation of possible water supply among the PGMA administration's priority legacy development programs with the vision of providing water to all, especially the waterless as the lead national government agency for provincial water supply development, the Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA) has been at the forefront of helping realize the President's vision and legacy program on water. Significantly much of LWUA's accomplishment have been attained and the reforms and innovations initiated with the appointment as Chairman of the LWUA Board of Trustees of former Congressman Prospero A. Pichay, Jr. in September 2006. In CY 2009, under the dynamic and inspiring stewardship of Chairman Prospero A. Pichay, Jr., LWUA registered its highest single year accomplishments in many of its key results target areas, namely:

PEMB, PICHAY LEAD golmble WATER PROJECT IN PGMC. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo assisted by Chairman Prospero A. Pichay Jr. (2nd from right) lowers the time capsule during the groundbreaking of P28-million possible water supply project to benefit some 22,000 residents of six depressed barangays in Parian, Pamplonga funded by a grant from the Office of the President. The project is part of LWUA's "Tubig na Malinis at Mura sa Bawa't Tahanan" program in support of PEPIM, administration's vision of safe drinking water for all barangays with particular emphasis on the so-called waterless communities.

ESTABLISHMENT OF MORE WATER DISTRICTS FOR EXPANDED WATER SUPPLY

CONVERGENCE initiation-building being the key to the successful development, proper management as well as sustained operation and maintenance of possible water supply systems in the provincial areas, LWUA in CY 2009 was able to establish an additional 177 new water districts covering as many cities and municipalities in the countryside. On top of this, LWUA last year also managed to reactivate or finally put into operation a total of 269 formerly non-operational water districts bringing the total number of operational water districts in the country to 880 covering 921 cities and municipalities.

MADE AVAILABLE P10 BILLION FUND FOR IMPROVED SERVICE, EXPANDED ACCESS TO SAFE DRINKING WATER

Increased public investment is crucial in the development of provincial water supply systems for improved/expanded water service for the already established water districts and providing access to safe drinking water for the still waterless communities currently in water districts. Towards this end in CY 2009, through the astute resourcefulness of Chairman Prospero A. Pichay in securing seed screening funds, LWUA was able to make available a total of P10 billion including P7.268 Billion in soft loans and grants coming from the national government to fund water supply projects especially targeting the small water districts and the poor, waterless communities.

INTRODUCED NOVEL FUNDING SCHEME FOR POOR COMMUNITIES

To make the water supply project undertaking a viable proposition and at the same time the corresponding water service and water rates affordable to the poor communities, LWUA in CY 2009 , through the initiative of Chairman Pichay has introduced financing schemes that offer reduced investment rates and longer repayment periods for project loans and the proper mix of financial assistance to the beneficiary water districts consisting of loans and outright grants.

ATTENDED TO THE NEEDS OF THE WATERLESS COMMUNITIES

In CY 2009, LWUA intensified its institutional, financial and technical development assistance to finally provide greater access to safe potable water supply to the residents of the so-called still waterless communities under its area of responsibility. LWUA has completed the construction of water supply systems in 51 erstwhile waterless communities while projects for 64 others are still ongoing and the end of last year.

PROVIDED ACCESS TO SAFE WATER TO AN ADDITIONAL FIVE MILLION PEOPLE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE...

With adequate funding secured through the initiative and efforts of Chairman Pichay which resulted to the completion by LWUA of 120 water supply infrastructure improvement and expansion projects in 2009, an additional five (5) million people living in the countryside were given access to safe potable water supply. As of yearend CY 2009, the number of Filipinos in the provinces who are directly served with piped potable water totaled more than twenty (20) million

AND COUNTING...

With 162 more water supply projects on the completion as of the end of 2009 and still more on the pipeline, the number of people benefitting from safe, potable and affordable water will definitely continue to rise in the coming years.

PGMA, US EMBOY KENNEY TURN OVER PTI-H MODERN WATER SYSTEM IN TAWI-L. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and US Ambassador Kristie Kenney recently led the inauguration and turnover of a newly-completed PTI-1 million modern water supply system to the Jolo Mainland Water District (JMWD) to provide safe and clean drinking water to thousands of consumers in the capital of Jolo and the adjacent towns of Patikul and Indanan in Jolo Province. The water system was rehabilitated, expanded and improved further with the financial assistance of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through the USAID Growth and Equity in Mindanao (USAID-GEM) and the Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA). Photo shows Pres. Arroyo, Ambassador Kenney and Jolo Governor Abdusakur Tan watching as (second to) LWUA acting Administrator Daniel L. Landingin, representing LWUA Chairman Prospero Pichay and also JMWD, presents the certificate of project completion and turnover to the residents of the beneficiary areas. Also in photo is JMWD interim general manager LWUA Engineer Alex Balisalisa.

P400-M FOR CAGAYAN WATER SUPPLY IMPROVEMENT. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo thanked LWUA Chairman Prospero A. Pichay, Jr. (seated, right) for allocating some P400 million for the improvement and expansion of water supply systems in Tuguegarao City and various towns of Cagayan province in support of her priority program of providing adequate and affordable drinking water to every Filipino home.

PICHAY WITH THE YOUTH of the country who, through the tireless effort of the government, are enjoying the benefits of possible water today and for future generations of Filipinos.

WATER GUSHES FORTH from a pipe during the inauguration of a LWUA-assisted water supply improvement and expansion project in Tinang, Quezon.

MODERN WATER TREATMENT PLANT. LWUA Chairman Prospero A. Pichay, Jr. and acting Deputy Administrator Engr. Bernardino Reyes inspecting a remote control console inside the modern water treatment plant of the Metro Basia Water District in Capas.

SWEET, FRESH WATER. LWUA Chairman Prospero A. Pichay, Jr. with acting Administrator Daniel L. Landingin sampling the sweet taste of fresh water during the inauguration of another LWUA-assisted water project in Quezon Province.

METROBASIN WATER PROJECT. President Glori Macapagal Arroyo seems on she is briefed about the details and the benefits of a LWUA-financed major water supply improvement project in Mandaluyong City, Bulacan.

INQUIRER Northern Luzon

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'Tent' people long for permanent homes

By Yolanda Serafe
Inquirer Northern Luzon

ROSALES, PANGASINAN—like any ordinary low-cost housing community, it has paved courtyard where children play, sari-sari stores in almost every corner, patches of vegetable gardens and women washing clothes around wells.

Except that in this neighborhood in Barangay San Pedro West, the "houses" are tents and the dwellers are families displaced by the massive flood that hit the town four months ago.

Some 800 families occupy the tents donated by Shelter Box Team, an international charity organization, through the Rotary Club in Baguio. Each of the 164 tents can accommodate 10 people, or at least two families share a tent.

While the people liken their situation to a town jamboree, they say they are happy—especially at night when most of them gather around mini-television sets in the courtyard to watch news and telenovelas.

It helps that they are relatives and former neighbors in a community near the dike along the Agno River in Barangays Carmen East and Carmen West. "We were neighbors, and many of us are related, so we get together well," said Salve Gutierrez, 30, a mother of two.

But it may still take some time before the flood victims finally find their own homes.

Unfit for housing

The area, being flood-prone, has been declared unfit for housing by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), says Mayor Ricardo Sevilla.

The municipality has asked the MGB to reconsider its decision, saying the flooding in October last year was "extraordinary."

"San Pedro West was flooded but the water was only a foot deep. If they would declare the village flood-prone, they might as well declare the entire Rosales as unfit for housing as the entire town went under water," Sevilla says.

The local government is running against time to establish a housing project. The tents can last only from six months to a year, and will eventually disintegrate because of exposure to heat, windand rain.

Municipal officials are looking at a site in Barangay Palakipak where the Habitat for Humanity can build 199 low-cost housing units.

The municipal also used a P700,000 donation and P1.5 million in local funds to buy a two-hectare lot in Barangay Balingasay near the Philippine National Red Cross will build 300 temporary shelters for the victims there.

While waiting for the housing projects, the victims have no choice but to survive. They said they are grateful to the organizations and people who helped them as they strive to bring normality back to their lives.

The local government has provided them with sources of potable water and electricity. Sanitary latrines and bathing facilities were built and garbage is collected daily.

Donations

Donors have given their basic needs, like food, clothes, slippers, blankets, mats and bed linen.

"We are very thankful for all the help we are receiving. We escaped the flood with only our clothes on our back. Our clothes, cooking stoves, our houses were all gone. We had nothing and many people came to help. We will forever be grateful," says Rhoda Reyes, a mother of three.

Most of the women lost their sources of income—selling native odors along the highway in the business district of Carmen or selling fish in the market. Those places can be easily reached from their former communities.

The new community in Barangay San Pedro West is a kilometer away from the town proper and about 8 km from the national highway. A one-way jeepney ride costs P18, while tricycle drivers charge P20 per trip.

What they want is for the local government or nongovernment organizations to help them start earning again.

"We are strong and we can easily learn. But we lack the skills and the capital. Just train us, support us with a little capital and in marketing what we will produce," said Lorna Cruz, who hopes to make floor mats.

Other women want to learn food processing, like making cacao and longganisa, because, they say it is easy to sell food."

The men are back driving jeepneys and tricycles, cooking and selling tapa (native fire cake), working in construction sites and accepting whatever odd jobs are available.

LIFE goes on for flood victims in Rosales, Pangasinan, as they try to start anew in a tent community in Barangay San Pedro West through the help of the local government and various organizations.

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DELTA

Farmers with a green mission

By Anselmo Roque
Cabanatuan City

WHEN FARMER ROBERTO Jacob, 58, found a shivering serpent eagle in his farm in Carranglan, Nueva Ecija, recently, he did not hesitate to give it shelter.

He knew that his find, which is smaller than the Philippine Eagle, is an endangered species. He didn't mind losing P5,000, when someone approached him and offered to buy the bird.

Jacob immediately took the eagle to Hoy Mariano, president of the Kalinga sa Kalikasan ng Pantay (Kapantay), in which he is a member.

"We nursed the eagle to health. We released it after a few days and Jacob was one of the happy men and women who watched the eagle soar high in the mountains," Mariano said.

Mariano, also an employee of the Department of Agrarian Reform in Nueva Ecija, said Jacob is just one of the 120 members of their organization in the village of Papaya who have made it their mission to take care and improve their environment.

Kapantay was established in 2007 and has adopted 387 hectares of mountain area near their village. Their members, mostly farmers, have been joining tree-planting activities and taking turns in maintaining a seedling nursery.

They also help in patrolling the area for protection against fire, resource hunting and charcoal makers who eat trees.

"Our neighbors talked and agreed to unite and help improve and protect our environment. We thought that nobody but ourselves and our community will benefit from it so we chose to take charge," Mariano said.

The group, he said, has planted 80,000 seedlings of various tree species in their adopted area. About 50 ha of land have been devoted to propagating endangered species of trees.

Mariano said several agencies and institutions like the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Central Luzon State University, Ateneo de Manila University and Department of Agrarian Reform, among others, have helped their group.

"Many students and other volunteers have been coming here to join our reforestation activity. They also conduct research and development work here," he said.

He said about 100 ha in the top portion of their adopted mountain has been developed into the "Sanong Amar Dear Park." The park features three sunsets and a water fall.

Many Japanese soldiers who used the area as quarters during World War II were killed in clashes there. Mariano said they have turned over to the police several strange bombs and grenades found buried in the area.

"Many Japanese visit the place once a year to offer prayers for their departed relatives during the war," he said.

But for Mariano, owning life-living once again to their adopted mountain is more than enough reward for the volunteers from Pantay.

"We are already seeing wild pigs and deer in our adopted mountain. There is so many kinds of birds (akak and hornbills) and we saw is coming soon for charcoal making," he said.

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Across the NATION

Editor | Assistant Editor Tony Burgonia

Pangasinan board OKs 2 nuke plants

VISITING FORCE
A US warship, USS Reuben James, a frigate and anti-submarine, anti-aircraft vessel, docks in the waters of Cebu City for supplies on Feb. 14. It was scheduled to leave on Feb. 16. LITO SEDANTOR

By Gabriel Cardenas
Inquirer Northern Luzon

LINGAYEN, PANGASINAN—FIRST, PANGASINAN played host to a coal-fired power plant in Sual town. Then, it accommodated Asia's largest hydroelectric dam in San Manuel town.

Now, this province of 2.64 million people (as of 2007) is opening its coastal areas for two nuclear power plants.

The possibility loomed large after the provincial board voted 7-1 with two abstentions late Monday to approve a resolution inviting South Korean investors to build nuclear power plants in Pangasinan.

Only Board Member Raul Sison, president of the local chapter of the Philippine Councilors League, voted against the resolution. Board Members Von Mark Mendoza and Alice Pablo abstained.

No fear, nuke's here

But Board Member Alfonso Slaen Jr., chair of a provincial board ad hoc committee, said there was nothing to worry about.

"What we approved was basically an expression of our sense of willingness to host [the nuclear power plants], subject, however, to certain conditions," said Slaen.

These conditions are acceptability by the people and an expert-prepared feasibility study, he said.

"We're not even sure that we'll be the host [of the nuclear plants]," he said.

He said, however, that the board's approval of the resolution swiftly became of its "urgency" since South Korea gave the Philippine government a week to submit a letter of intent on building a nuclear plant.

Slaen said the government was not ready "unless there are provinces that are willing to undertake the construction of these nuclear plants."

The board acted on a request of Pangasinan Rep. Mark Cojuangco for the province to assist South Korea to build a nuclear plant in Pangasinan.

Cojuangco said by hosting the nuclear plants, Pangasinan will be assured of cheaper electricity to attract more investors.

Slaen said it was "very very clear" that the location of the nuclear plants would be identified only after a geological study by national and international agencies on nuclear power.

"It's also clear that the nuclear power plants shall be made operational, if at all, not less than five years from the time there is a go-signal from scientists and geologists that underneath the circle," Slaen said.

Swift decision

In voting against the resolution, Sison said it was "frustrated by" panel.

"We should have been given more time to study it. Because for me, when I hear the word 'nuclear power plant' I imagine it to be like an atomic bomb that will destroy all living things around us," Sison said.

On Monday, the board went into executive session to discuss the resolution and invited the nuclear experts to answer questions, who appeared at the session hall to discuss his proposal.

Sison said right after the committee hearing, the board entered session and the ad hoc committee report was presented for approval.

"But I respect the right of the majority," Sison said.

Cops rescue trader, 2 kids from kidnappers

LA TRINIDAD, BENGUET—A Chinese businessman and his two children were abducted by armed men here on Tuesday morning but they were rescued by policemen in Atok town an hour later.

Chief Supt. Orlando Mercado, Cordillera police director, said eight men wearing ski masks blocked the Mitsubishi Pajero of the 41-year-old businessman in Barangay Melon and forced him and his children into a van that sped off toward Baguio City.

The businessman, whose family runs a firm engaged in mushroom production, was taken in about 7 a.m. with his 11-year-old daughter and 10-year-old son.

At least 10 children, who were on their way to the Tuesday Elementary School here, saw the kidnapping and reported it to their parents who alerted the police.

A rescue operation was organized after policemen in Barangay Sayangan in Atok town were alerted.

The kidnapping was over after an hour with the arrest of three suspects at a police checkpoint in the village of Sayangan in Atok. The businessman and his children were rescued unharmed.

Results said police arrested Alberto Tugas, 31; Rey Lavin, 23, and Rolay Ogana, 34. Police were pursuing five others. Delmar Cariño, Inquirer Northern Luzon

Sta. Rosa mass wedding: When words aren't enough

STA. ROSA CITY—BERRIE, activist speak leader (See *words for newlyweds Joseph Albert Wilhelm, 38, and Anne Schmidtke, 31, who were among the 464 couples who tied the knot in a mass wedding held here on Valentine's Day.*

Unlike the others, however, the Wilhelm couple were said "I do." Both are mute.

"I was surprised when it was the Cariño's mother who approached me for mass wedding," said Cora Briones of the City Registrar Office.

Briones said the mother also came with the couple during the ceremonies to answer queries on the marriage license of the couple.

She said there were also two couples in which the grooms were to mothers.

This was the 12th year the city government held a mass wedding for couples who were mostly longtime live-in partners but had not been legally married, said city registrar Alice Paz.

Sta. Rosa City Mayor Amie Nazareno said she was happy as the number of couples in the mass wedding.

"This [marriage] helps uplift the morale of the couples," she said.

"There are a lot of couples these days who opt to just live together because they do not have the means to hold a formal wedding," she added.

Twice each week, the city government also holds free wedding ceremonies at city hall.

The wedding is for every couples regardless of one's social status or disability, said the mayor. Marvin Cinco, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Non-uniformed cops, soldiers nab rebel suspect

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—COLLEAGUES and relatives of an automatic woman arrested on suspicion that she was a communist rebel appealed for her release, saying her arrest was part of a series which crackdown by the Arroyo administration on legal, leftist groups.

Cirila Ramada, 49, was caught by soldiers and policemen who weren't wearing uniforms in an arrest procedure similar to abductions commonly carried out in kidnapping cases.

She was walking at the corner of Iznart and De Leon Streets here on her way to her home for a checkup for her asthma and an unspecified liver disease.

Authorities said they found a handgun and grenade in the possession of Cirila, who was blindfolded during her arrest.

Cirila denied carrying weapons. "I have no reason to carry one," she said.

Bono, Cirila's brother, said his sister couldn't possibly be a member of the New People's Army "How can she be? She is so sickly," he said.

Cirila came a living by baking in Jaro, Iloilo, and has been a volunteer for the group Pagbugtong ang mga Manggagawa sa Dagat ng Pilipinas (Pamanggas in Alliance of Seamen in Panay and Guimaras).

Authorities, however, said Cirila was secretary of the Southern Front Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines and NPA in Panay, which operates in the Iloilo towns of Igbaras, Leon, San Joaquin and Miag-ao.

Lt. Mark Andrew Pondoc, spokesman of the Philippine Army's 3rd Infantry Division, said Cirila's arrest was executed by several warrants for cases of multiple murder, frustrated murder, robbery and other crimes in Antique and southern Iloilo since the 1990s.

Cirila said she was active in peasant activism as a student in Antique and in Ivisan on social issues like rice and oil price increases. "There's nothing illegal in what I did," she said.

Cirila's group, Pamanggas, said Cirila helped train farmers on organic farming and raising productivity.

Lorna Capadocio, Pamanggas secretary general, said the group was alarmed that Cirila's arrest came just after the news of 43 health workers in Morong, Rizal.

"This could be a prelude to more attacks against militant party list groups," Capadocio said.

The arrests came as the deadline imposed by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for the military to crush the communist rebellion drew near. Lt. Gen. Delfin Bangit, Philippine Army chief, said the military could beat it. With a report from Princess Lim, Inquirer Mindanao

LP Pampanga bets remove illegal campaign posters

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Liberal Party candidates in Pampanga on Tuesday started removing campaign posters of the party's standard bearers, Sen. Benigno Aquino III, and his running mate, Sen. Manuel Roxas II, outside designated poster areas.

Gov. Eddie Panlilio, LP provincial chair, led other candidates in removing campaign materials nailed on lamp posts in Barangay Balibil.

Panlilio said these will be transferred to places designated by the Commission on Elections as common poster areas.

"The ruling of Comelec to designate specific places where posters can be put is being challenged by politicians and [their] supporters. We do not want to violate that," Panlilio said.

He said texts should be given discretion and spared from campaign posters "especially now that people are becoming ecologically conscious."

"I have talked to the supporters of the LP to take our illegal campaign posters. I just hope other political parties will do the same," he said.

Lawyer Jessie Lambino, provincial election supervisor, said posters on trees and in public buildings, bridges, wires or poles are prohibited. Charlene Cayabyab, Inquirer Central Luzon

It's now law: Seniors get 20% discount

From page A1

said Climbo Pinasa, deputy presidential spokesperson. The official copy of the measure arrived in Malacañang on Monday night.

The law will allow senior citizens to avail themselves of the full 20 percent discount they are supposed to enjoy.

The discount was reduced to 8 percent with the imposition of the 12 percent value-added tax on certain goods and services in 2005. (*See In the know.*)

A group of senior citizens hailed the signing of Sen.

"This is a victory of the senior citizens! We thanked this bill and lobbied for it over the past three years," said Salvacion Bautista, a member of the Coalition of Elderly Organizations of Older Persons Associations of the Philippines.

The Coalition of the Services of the Elderly (Cose) said it was relieved that Ms. Arroyo had finally listened to the elderly's demand.

"It was only the cause people who have patiently pushed for this bill to become a law, we will not have a landmark legislation on social protection for the elderly," Cose said in a statement.

The coalition said it also recognized the legislators who cosponsored with the senior citizens in the drafting and passage of the measure.

Abstinence

"With the signing of the (measure), our elderly can now expect additional financial assistance to help them weather the uncertainties of old age in an economic problem," Rep. Liza Maza said.

Maza is the chairperson of the House committee on women and gender equality.

Other said Ms. Arroyo was fully aware of the fiscal costs of the law.

"But people should remember that this is only one of many tax-

IN THE KNOW

THE AMENDED SENIOR CITIZENS Act of 2010 gives the elderly, benefits and privileges not included in the Senior Citizens Act of 1992 (Republic Act No. 7432).

Some five million senior citizens, defined as residents citizens of the Philippines aged 60 and above, will get the following:

- A 20-percent discount and exemption from the value-added tax on the sale of goods and services involving medical and dental fees, transport fares, services in hotels and restaurants, admission fees in theaters and other places of leisure.

In case of discount promos, the senior citizens shall avail themselves of either the promotional discount or the 20 percent discount, whichever is higher.

- Mandatory Philhealth coverage
- Free medical and dental services, diagnostic and laboratory fees in all government facilities
- A monthly stipend of P500
- For indigents, a P1,500 monthly stipend until free vaccination against the influenza virus and pneumococcal disease
- A 20-percent discount on certain kinds of consumption less than 30 cubic meters a month and electric bills of consumption is less than 100 kilowatt-hours

- Educational assistance for those who shall enter school, admission requirements.

To avoid themselves of benefits, senior citizens should present their passport or other documents establishing their citizenship and age.

In case of death, the nearest surviving relative of the deceased senior citizen shall get P5,000.

The law also orders the Department of Health, local government units and other government agencies to institute a national health program for the elderly.

It also establishes an Office for Senior Citizens Affairs in all cities and municipalities, and a senior citizens ward in every government hospital.

First-time violators of the law face imprisonment of six months to two years and a fine ranging from P50,000 to P100,000.

For subsequent violations, the fine can go up to P200,000, and the prison term can reach six years.

Anyone who abuses the privileges granted in the law shall pay a fine of P5,000 to P50,000, and shall be jailed for at least six months. Cyril L. Bonabon, *Inquirer Research*

Source: www.senate.gov.ph

ARROYO

a member of BAME said the law was a victory for social protection in the Philippines.

Esguerra, nevertheless, said the campaign for social protection in the country "still has a long way to go."

"The battle is still being fought by the elders now who are being swept out of Mount Banahaw by Mobuteking. The budgets for those who have become unemployed due to Typhoon Yolanda and Tropical Storm Undoy have yet to be released and we hope these won't be diverted," said BAMF facilitator Ion Mesina.

Mesina said "pressures need assistance and protection from the negative impact of climate change, and even when they're senior citizens go to government hospitals, medicines are not available." Christine V. Esguerra

RP-MILF peace talks put off over drafts' differences

From page A1

Per Iqbal's account, the MILF proposed a federal state for the Bangsamoro people in its draft. The government mentioned no such thing, but offered "enhanced autonomy" in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

Malacañang diplomat Sarah Ordinas bin Abdul Razak is preparing in council to the Philippines to personally oversee backroom negotiations between the two camps, according to a source familiar with the preparations.

Abdul Razak, a ranking official in the Office of the Prime Minister of Malaysia, is serving as the third-party facilitator of the peace talks.

The Office of the Presidential adviser on the Peace Process confirmed that the talks had been postponed to the MILF's request.

Backroom negotiations on

Iqbal said in another interview that despite the gap between the two drafts, "there is still something that can be done to salvage the negotiations."

"Things can still happen," he said.

Iqbal said the MILF had requested the postponement "in order to attend to pressing matters related to the ongoing negotiations."

He said the postponement would not limit the pace of the peace process because backroom negotiations were ongoing in place of the formal talks.

He added that the resumption of the talks would depend on the progress of the backroom negotiations, and that the target was late this month or early in March.

The Inquirer source said the backroom negotiations were aimed at "closing the gap" between the GRP and MILF representatives.

The two camps held talks and exchanged drafts last month in Kuala Lumpur. They then announced that they would submit on constitutions on the documents with their principals and counterparties.

'Nothing to discuss'

The government hopes to forge a final agreement to end 40 years of rebellion by the second quarter of 2010, before President Macapagal-Arroyo steps down on June 30.

Iqbal said the MILF panel submitted a comprehensive draft agreement, including a proposed federal setup for the Bangsamoro people.

In contrast, he said, the government offered nothing new in its draft.

"There is nothing to discuss. Everything in their draft is contained in existing laws," Iqbal said. He said the MILF was looking an abdul Razak to talk the two panels into meeting halfway.

The MILF leadership had earlier rejected the government's for a "refunded" proposal of "enhanced autonomy." Iqbal said this proposal was never offered to the rebel group, which never rejected it.

ABAYA. Government has made proposals that are a shame by executive order.

IQBAL. Two draft agreements have no point of convergence.

Iqbal earlier described the two draft agreements as having "no point of convergence."

'Executive action'

In an interview, Annabelle Abaya, Ms. Arroyo's adviser on the peace process, said the government was open to proposed changes in the Constitution but could not guarantee the approval of Congress of those changes.

She said, however, that the government was prepared to talk with the MILF about its revised federalism.

Abaya said the government had put forward proposals that were doable by the Executive branch, including enhanced autonomy, but did not venture into areas that required actions by the Constitution or drawing up a new policy.

Asked to explain "enhanced autonomy," Abaya said the government expressed willingness to enhance the powers and responsibilities of the ARMM through "Executive action."

She said this means enhancing the ARMM's ability to release its share in national revenues, facilitating the entry of economic, trade and tourism missions, providing technical support in drafting agrarian laws and programs, and providing assistance in implementing the Sharia justice and educational systems, among others.

"This may sound not substantive enough, but that would not be a detriment to reaching a meaningful agreement," Abaya said.

MOA-AD

The government panel has submitted that its draft agreement was crafted along the parameters of the Constitution and consistent with the Supreme Court ruling on the legal infirmities of the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD).

But Iqbal said: "We cannot negotiate within the Philippine Constitution. That is binding only to the government."

The aborted signing of the MOA-AD on Aug. 5, 2008, led to the fresh outbreak of wide-scale hostilities between government and MILF forces that lasted almost a year.

Iqbal told the Inquirer in Davao City that the MILF was bent on moving forward in accordance with a joint statement issued by the two panels on July 19, 2009.

Reframe consensus points

In that statement, the two panels agreed "to reframe the consensus points" in the process of crafting a comprehensive peace agreement.

According to Iqbal, it is only logical that the starting point for the formal peace talks for the MOA-AD because that is where the points were last struck on.

He said that in terms of conceptual framework, the MOA-AD completed 70 percent of the MILF's draft agreement, although it only accounted for 30-40 percent when the implementing mechanisms was included.

Divers find whale shark with fins and tail sliced off

From page B1

seen hunted on the shore the next morning, he said.

SHARKS III

Last week, representatives of some 50 countries attended the third meeting of the International Conservation on Migratory Sharks (SHARKS III) hosted by the Philippines in Manila, eleven of them signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) pledging to protect the whale sharks.

The participants also agreed to advance the protection of seven shark species that needed protection—the Basking Shark, Great White Shark, Whale Shark, Spiny Dogfish Shark, Porbeagle Shark, and Shortfin and Longfin Mako Sharks.

SHARKS III falls under the Convention on Migratory Species and Wild Animals (CMS), otherwise known as the Bonn Convention.

"The memorandum of understanding on the basenking is a breakthrough since this is the first international cooperation that would ensure the protection and conservation of the sharks all over the world," said Dr. Mundita Lim, chief of the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau post-conference chair.

The document was signed by the Philippines, China, United States, Costa Rica, Palau, Congo, Senegal, Republic of Guinea, Togo, Liberia, Kenya and Ghana. At least 10 signatories are needed to make it enforceable, Lim said.

Conservation plan

Lim said the forging of the memorandum of understanding was important in crafting a conservation plan that included strengthening the policies of countries on shark conservation, possible banning for shark protection, and the enforcement of transboundary regulations to ensure the welfare of migratory sharks.

The plan will serve a ban on "shark finning," or the practice of simply harvesting the fins of sharks with the still-alive carcass creatures thrown back into the sea, she said.

Studies have identified "shark finning" as one of the reasons for the rapid decline in shark populations worldwide. It is estimated that 100 to 200 million sharks are killed annually for their fins—the prime ingredient for shark-fin soup delicacy.

Lim said that the investigation of conservation plan would be finalized in the next meeting of member signatories to the Bonn Convention.

No coordination

"The sharks are freely moving across waters of any country. That's why this occupation is very important to nations that have their conservation. It is important for countries to come together toward the goal of conserving sharks or else migratory sharks that may pass by their waters," the official said.

In Batangas, Gov. Vilma Santos, provincial chief of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, said the most immediate reason for the death of whale sharks "are climate change and people who use illegal means to fall and hunt from marine mammals."

Villanueva said the City Environment and Natural Resources Office did not coordinate with her office about the latest beaching death.

She said she did not even see the fish before it was buried and that those who found it must have at least gathered basic information, such as length, size and width.

Bishop pokes fun at religious leaders playing god

From page A1

probably confused, according to archbishop Emeritus Oscar Cruz.

The retired Roman Catholic bishop said he would not wish to be in God's shoes right now.

Cruz spoke at the Bantigue forum in Manila where he was asked what his thought of new diaries flocking to influential religious leaders Brother Mike Velarde and Pastor Apollo Quiboloy, who both commanded big followings.

"I am very happy I'm not God because if I were God, I would not know what to do," Cruz said, "Here is the son of God endorsing this, and here is the leader endorsing this. I think God must be having fun."

Easter Sunday decision

Quiboloy heads the Davao-based group called Kingdom of Jesus Christ. The Name Above Every Name, while Velarde heads the El Shaddai group. Members of both groups say their members can move mountains.

Quiboloy, who claims to be the "Appointed Son of God," seems to have become particularly popular among politicians in the run-up to the May 10 elections. A number of them have visited his "Project Mountain" compound in Davao and all reportedly have confirmed they will attend a presidential forum the group is hosting next month.

Velarde's support has long been sought by candidates in national and local elections. On Sunday, Nacionalista Party standard-bearer Manuel Villar appeared as the only invited candidate at an El Shaddai rally in Hong Kong, where Velarde ordered to the minority vote. Luz Pilar Ilay, Cynthia Villar, as "Madame First Lady."

Velarde said his group would make a collective decision by Easter Sunday on who it would vote for in May.

What about CBCP?

Still to be heard from is the Iglesia ni Cristo (INC), another power group with a reputation for voting as a bloc during elections.

Cruz said he was more amused by all the endorsements being sought from religious leaders. He noted with a laugh that some of the statements to be produced has gone to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), composed of members of the Church hierarchy.

"The environment, I do not feel bad about it. I'm not royal. It's take it seriously," he said. "I just think it's funny that [a] religious leader will endorse this, this and this. God will be having a very, very hard time."

ONLY. God must be confused

Editor Teddyboy B. Melendrez
Assistant Editor Francis T.J. Ortuoste

SPORTS

Aces go for Kings' throat

Alaska out to prove history correct; SMB seeks 3-1 lead

By Cordell P. Tupas

ALASKA TRIES TO PUT GINEBRA TO THE UNITED AND BOOKA written ticket to the NPC-PBA Philippine Cup finals in Game 4 of their best-of-seven semifinal series tonight at the Big Dome.

The Aces, losing 8-3, admits to "left 'N' find last year, are on total command of the series, 3-0, but the Gin Kings enjoyed clinks to Alaska's armor in Game 3 when they nearly overcame a 23-point deficit in the final quarter before bowing, 91-88.

Guaranteed a 7:30 p.m. with Alaska coach Tim Cone still wary of a Ginebra fightback despite the fact that no team in league history had won a series after going 0-3 down.

"We know we can't let our guard down, certainly not against veteran like Ginebra," said Cone.

"It will be reinforced to us by that comeback and hopefully that will get us ready for Game 4."

Sun Miguel shoots for a 3-1 lead in its own arena with Purefoods at 5 p.m.

The Beermen broke the 1-1 tie Sunday night with an 88-76 win.

Coach Siot Tanquingcen said the Beermen showed their resolve in playing solid defense. The win came just two days after the Tender Juicy Giants walloped the Beermen, 130-84, to tie the series.

"We are going back to the basics, which is to play solid defense," said Tanquingcen. "What happens, we make sure we play as hard as we could against Purefoods."

The Tender Juicy Giants were left wanting in offensive firepower in Game 3, a fact that did not escape coach Ryan Gregorio.

"Our offense was pathetic," Gregorio said. "We know by a fact that we can't win against San Miguel if we don't score in the high 90s."

Gregorio said Ginigo is coming into play in the series. The Tender Juicy Giants needed five games to dispose of Basin to Shine in the quarterfinals and, like Cruzbox, will be playing their ninth game in 17 days.

"We rested Monday because we had to fly last Sunday," Gregorio said. "I have a short rotation, which means that my players play longer minutes. Sun Miguel has a deeper roster and fresher legs."

Cruzbox coach Jong Uichico is optimistic the Gin Kings can still pull off an improbable comeback.

"I know the odds are not in our favor," Uichico said. "If we can get a win on Wednesday it will put he 1-3 and I know there's a team that has come back from that deficit."

Game rescalled the only time he led, 3-0, in a series, Alaska lost Game 4. "Hopefully, I'm smart enough to remember that to my players," he said.

PURSUED! Star Maier'ster disputes the rebound with San Miguel's Jay Washington Friday's Game 3.

AUGUST BALTAZAR

ICTSI-MALARAYAT

Eagle-spiked 65 powers Bernis

By Manong R. Carcillo

BERNIS: Ahead by 1

LIPA CITY—Artis Bernis fired an eagle-spiked seven under par 64 point day to seize a one-stroke lead over Jay Bayron after the opening round of the ICTSI Classic at the corporate Mount Malarayat layout here.

The former national champion, who struggled in his early years as a professional at a mediocre accident that forced him to take a long break, fired a 31 in his last nine holes to overtake Bayron, who needed a 66 in a morning flight.

Bayron birdied his last three holes in a relatively sizzling 34 running in, even as shooters Jerry Ilhan Salun and Arnold Villanueva fired identical 66s to crowd the early leaders.

Marvin Dumandan, the next-up to Dante Zarate here last year, double bogeyed the 13th to settle for 6-0 Nic Rider Tour veteran Mars Pasay.

Elmer Salvador, who ruled the Philippine Open over the same course last December, fired a 71 as the stars of the event put up by ICTSI and backed by JSE Golf Management, Jagtar, Land Rover, Smoke 23, Daily TV and Golf Pacific.

Playing with a re-tooled swing, the 43-year-old Salun under limited three of his last six holes for his first counter-par card since the 66. The Country Club International refuses he inside the Top 10.

Sweet-swinging Jerry Pagunsan, who missed the cut at the TOC, had one of his finest starts in years, signing for a 70 for his four over-under off Bayron, who earned his breakthrough win at Forest Hills last year.

Asian Tour regular Tony Lascuña failed to sustain a hot 32 in his front nine, shooting four bogeys against a single birdie coming home for a 71, the same score turned in by Zarate.

Frankie Miñoza fired a 74 in his nine shots off the pace but redeemed himself in the upper half of the leaderboard heading into the final 36 holes.

Jarin Higuerras had a horrid day shooting an 81 marred by a quadruple bogey 8 on the par-5 17th. He also had a triple bogey and a double bogey against only two birdies.

Pinoy Davis Cuppers eye revenge vs Japan

By Cordell P. Tupas

THE CHIHAYA LIBRARY PHILIPPINE Davis Cup team isn't looking anything to chance in its bid to avenge Yoon Group 1 sweep against Japan from March 5 to 7.

That's why the Filipino cuppers led by Cecil Mamiit will be leaving for Osaka a week before the showdown to acclimatize themselves with the cold weather in Osaka and to try the carpet surface in the city's Gamabayou Dome.

"The is not really a guessing game," SP complaining captain Chris Guarte said yesterday at the PSA Forum at Shakey's UN Avenue. "We know that the weather and the playing surface will be our problems. But I believe our players will be able to manage it."

Joining Mamiit, the reigning Southeast Asian Games champion, in the squad are fellow Filipino-American Treat Conrad Huey, Francis Casey Alcantara, Johnny Arcilla and JP Tiotuico.

The Filipinos are hoping to avenge their 0-5 defeat to the Japanese squad two years ago.

A victory over Japan will move the Filipinos into a clash with powerhouse Australia in May.

Davis Cup coordinator Randy Villanueva is confident that the Filipinos will be able to pull

PHILIPPINE PUBLIC SAFETY COLLEGE

PHILIPPINE PUBLIC SAFETY COLLEGE (PPSC) HAS TRANSFERRED TO A NEW LOCATION

The Philippine Public Safety College (PPSC), the premier educational institution for the uniformed personnel of the Philippine National Police, Bureau of Fire Protection and Bureau of Jail Management and Penology under the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) is now at the 5th Floor of the Commerce and Industry Plaza (PCCI Building), McKinley Hill, Taguig City. The National Police College (NPC) shall continue to hold classes at McKinley Hill and likewise at the Philippine National Police Academy (PNPA), Camp Mariano Castañeda, Silang Cavite even when the construction of the National Police College facilities is completed by Megaworld.

While the Philippine Public Safety College has vacated its old site at Lawton Avenue, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City the National Forensic Science and Training Institute (NFSTI) remains in Lawton Avenue, pending completion of its new site at Philippine National Training Institute (PNTI), Camp Vicente Lim, Laguna.

Gorres home sweet

By Jhonee Napallacan, Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—HE MIGHT NOT FIGHT AGAIN on top of the ring but to his friends and neighbors, 2-"The Dream" Gorres is still a hero.

About 200 people, mostly from his village in Barbon Peninsula, Mandaue City, welcomed Gorres when he arrived at the Mactan-Cebu International Airport at around 10:30 a.m. yesterday.

City officials led by Mandaue Mayor Jonas Cortes and those from Barbon Peninsula also came to greet Gorres.

Gorres, in a wheelchair, gamely struck boxing poses before his well-wishers but when he saw his four children—Ghoebert, Shayla Dhey, Dhey and Dhoebey—holding banners with the words "We Miss You Papa," "We Love You Papa" and "Welcome Home Papa" he broke down.

Gorres told reporters he missed his children very much and was very eager to go home already to his birthplace in Las Vegas.

A courtesy of 50 cars followed Gorres to the barangay hall of Barbon Peninsula, where he was given a brief tribute.

Michael Aldeguer, president of ALA Promotions and manager of Gorres, said they would support the continued rehabilitation of the ill-fated boxer in Cebu.

Aldeguer admitted that they have raised only $78,000 of Gorres' huge hospital bill in the United States which reached $560,000 (about P28 million).

PINOY PRIDE Filipino-American John Robert Celski (right) shares the podium with silver medalist and US teammate Apolo Anton Ohno (left) and gold medalist Lee Jung-su of South Korea after the 1,000-meter short track speed skating final at the Vancouver Winter Olympics. The 19-year-old Celski, the youngest of three boys, was born in Monterey, California, to a Polish father who served in the US Army and a Filipino mother.

RP Patriots target 2-0 finals lead

By Jasmine W. Payo

COACH LOUIE ALAS hopes that the Philippine Patriots will be able to use their brand of defense into motion when they shoot for a commanding 2-0 lead over Indonesia Siaska Medan Bhinneka in the Asean Basketball League (ABL) finals today.

"Game 1's done so show them that we can play smart defense," said Alas. "The team was so relaxed and we completely [in] Game 1."

Game 2 of the best-of-five championship series gets going at 8 p.m. at the PhilSCA Flying V arena in San Juan.

Alas said defense has been the hallmark of his team's performance even after import Gabe Freeman's offensive sock keyed the Patriots' 76-68 Game 1 triumph last Friday.

The 6-foot-3 Freeman, who replaced the inconsistent Brandon Rowe) late in the elimination phase, unloaded a league-high 30 points in the series opener.

"We came out a little too comfortable," said Freeman, who averages 18.6 points per game. "We have to work on the defensive end. I think coach prepared us, he did everything in his powers, so it's up to us now."

But Freeman knows he'll be top of mind when Siaska Medan, boosted by Australian import Nakeia Miller and Alex Hartmann, tries to even up matters when the series heads to Jakarta for Game 3 and if necessary, for Game 4.

"We must limit Freeman's production next game," said Indonesian coach Peter Rering.

(See Pinoy Davis A12)

Pinoy Davis ...

(from page A12)

through against the Japanese.

"I like new shooters," said Villanueva, who won with Gilvanne Lhuillier offwid Danny Francisco in the Event presented by Unifast Battery Pagcor, Shakey's and Asced. Thipothal. Ig we will meet our revenge against Japan."

Playing for Japan are Takao Soraki, the winningest Japanese player in Davis Cup history, veterans Jun Sasaki, Satoshi Iwabuchi, Kei Nishikori, Yuichi Sugita and Tatsuma Ito.

By Top Choice
At Santa Ana Park

Race 1 - (Pyramid Co.) - 1st Race (1,000 m) - 3:00 p.m.
Race 2 - (Pyramid Co.) - 2nd Race (1,000 m) - 3:30 p.m.
Race 3 - (Pyramid Co.) - 3rd Race (1,000 m) - 4:00 p.m.
Race 4 - (Pyramid Co.) - 4th Race (1,000 m) - 4:30 p.m.
Race 5 - (Pyramid Co.) - 5th Race (1,000 m) - 5:00 p.m.
Race 6 - (Pyramid Co.) - 6th Race (1,000 m) - 5:30 p.m.
Race 7 - (Pyramid Co.) - 7th Race (1,000 m) - 6:00 p.m.
Race 8 - (Pyramid Co.) - 8th Race (1,000 m) - 6:30 p.m.

CALVIN Abueva of Excel Raid (unseen) loses possession under pressure from JC Intal of Ascof Lagundi (right)

Excel Roof 5 upsets Ascof

Cossack Blue also wins PBL debut

By Jasmine W. Payo

EMBO AQUINO PICKED UP WHERE HE left off in the NCAA, powering Excel Roof to an 83-75 upset of tournament favorite Ascof Lagundi at the start of the PBL Pilipino Cup yesterday at the PhilSCA Flying V Arena in San Juan.

Again, who fueled the San Sebastian Stags' NCAA championship run, buried back-to-back baskets to spark a pivotal 11-5 run in the final six minutes that gave the Excel side a 80-69 spread, from a slim 69-68 lead.

Aquino wound up with a game-high 17 points and fellow Stag Calvin Abueva finished a rebound short of a double-double with 13 markers and nine boards.

"I'm surprised with the way the boys played," said Excel Roof coach Jeo Aguinis, whose roster includes his key Stags.

"They showed maturity. I reminded the team that we're playing [a] rather [good]."

Ascof (formerly Phoenix), the team in four following a title stint last season, crashed 53-62 in the third period behind Rain or Shine big man Mark Cardona and JR Quiñahan to dent its 66-69.

In the second game, Jay-R Taganas, Raffy Reyes and Aurel Cañamero powered Cossack Blue to an 81-77 decision of Rain-C.

PBL chair Ding Cuzner and San Juan Mayor JV Ejercito graced the league's opening fires.

(See Excel Roof 5 A12)

Second straight draw for Wesley

FILIPINO GRANDMASTER WESLEY SO HImained in the title hunt despite a second straight draw Monday in the 2016 Aeroflot Open chess tournament at the Hotel Cosmos Delta in Moscow, Russia.

Handling black and facing a Russian GM of almost similar strength, So agreed to a 21-move truce with Artyom Timofeev in the seventh round to climb to 4.5 points, just half a point behind pacesetting GMs Ian Nepomniachtchi, Boris Savchenko and Boris Grachev of Russia and GMs Le Quang Liem and Nguyen Ngoc Truong Son of Vietnam.

The 18-year-old So, seeded 17th with an Elo of 2686, and Timofeev, ranked 28th with Elo of 2652, split the point after 21 moves.

Both players had the same number of pieces on the board...queen, rook, bishop and five pawns for so-and-queen, rook, knight and five pawns for Timofeev, who is bunched with So and nine others at 4.5 points.

So thus boosted his chances to capture the top junior award for the second straight year with three wins, three draws and one loss.

He is half a point ahead of GM Samuel Sevian of Russia in the race for top junior player.

Last year, So edged Sadrif Sikgirov and Aleksandr Rakhmanov for the award.

So next plays white against Chinese GM Zhou Jianchao (Elo 2632), winner over reserve Nicolas GM Unis Ramsky on Monday, in the eighth round.

Rex Esserva

SO: Half a point off the five leaders

Shakey's serves up V-League camp

SHAKEY'S V-LEAGUE BRINGS HOlayboll action to a series of summer camps nationwide starting next month.

Open to girls 9 to 14 years old, the Shakey's V-League Summer Camp Star 2: Spike-Blocking kicks off at SM North Edsa on March 5 to 7, before heading to Gil Puyat on March 12 to 14, SM Cebu on March 19 to 21, and SM Davao on March 26 to 28.

"We only had it in one venue East [year] and more than 300 participants attended," Shakey's Pizza brand manager Goochy Matanguihan said in yesterday's PSA Forum in Shakey's UN Avenue. "We're confident we'll be able to attract more this time."

Roger Gonzaga, coach of multititled San Sebastian, heads the camp designed to teach basic volleyball skills to participants.

Lyngar mates Kenneth Rivera, Jimel Mendoza, Laarnier Ann Ludigan, Jana Devanadera, Michelle Carolino and Gretchen Ho serve as instructors.

"We're holding the camp again because of the successful pilot episode that we had," said Matanguihan, who was joined by Gonzaga and Ariel Nepomuceno in the weekly session hosted by Gudani Baldwin, Rupert Shakey's and Jared.

The provincial camps will be open to the public for a registration fee of P800, but tuition of a camp shirt and a three-day basic training program.

Jasmine W. Payo

Fifa World Cup action on Balls

FOOTBALL, DISABLED IN FAVOR OF BASketball and boxing in the country, gets a massive popularity boost with the five airing of the 2018 Fifa World Cup in South Africa on local cable sports channel Balls.

The live broadcast of the opening spectacle marks the first time that all live games will be aired on local television, unlike in previous tournaments when the World Cup matches were shown on a pay-per-view basis, said Balls channel head Jojo Binsfa at a press conference in Bellaire's Restaurant in Quezon City.

"With our broadcast, we hope that the sport gets the momentum it needs to develop further in the country," Binsfa said.

Balls will be linking up with the Philippine Football Federation on matters related to the promotion of the World Cup, he added.

The World Cup, which will be held for the first time in Africa, kicks off on June 11 with host South Africa playing Mexico.

To drum up interest for the World Cup, Balls is producing a show dubbed "The Road to Johannesburg" starting Feb. 20 at 10 p.m.

Binsfa did not say how much Balls spent to gain exclusive broadcast rights to the Cup.

Cedelyn Reyes

SPORTS WATCH

'Barkada' derby fires off today

IT WILL BE A 10TH-straight basketball-unning grassroot tourney from Grosgaro, Zamboanga, Cebuano and Metro Manila when the "Barkada" 6-a-side derby unfolds today at the San Juan Coliseum.

The derby makes room this P140,000 tilt for 16 teams, including two from Bohol.

Eddie Chiefs Alert Jose CE entry current champ, which off the title tournament's P70,000 top Hamilton at Bay derby and settled for runner-up honors.

220K Big Event slated at PCC

THE NON-LOOK PASS! Dly Cocktail will be unleashed this Wednesday with the holding of the "Dancing Big Purse" 220K Super Dly Event in Cocktail.

PCC chief executive officer Patrick Antonio, who presided over the venue's facility upgrade, including the latest addition with the help of his daughter Pena and Bobcley Chess.

The country's derby top guns, some of their foreign and interational cocktails, will see action in the super competition.

Rivalry Day Doesn't Disappoint

By: Jonas Jamberg

Army Pilots	0	1	Navy Sailors
Kaya Diggers	0	1	Union Rusty Project
Air Force	0	1	Cordova Eagles
Police Truncheons	0	0	Marine Whiz
Barracuda Mafia	0	1	Defense Strong
Bombshells	0	1	Loser

Nanoada Aloha Boardsports 7 3 Dilliman Victory Liner

Sunday's exhilirating match-ups between Army Pilots v Navy Sailors and Kaya Diggers4 v Union Rusty Project didn't disappoint, as the bitter rivals showed just how important a win over a familiar adversary can be. Both teamsmay were played at blinding speed and with noteworthy flair displays why the First Division is set apart from the second tier of the LBC-UFL.

The battle of the Armed Forces took place at 2pm in the ASCOM field in Fort Bonifacio, where tensions were unquestionably high. Cards were flying out of the referees pocket on a frequent basis, with both sides unwilling to give an inch to their opponents. Navy Sailors would prevail 1-0 in the end however, with a penalty enough to hand Army Pilots their first loss in the League.

Five hours later, scintillating action was on show for the pumping crowd that turned up at 5pm at the Nanoada Club in Merville, Paranaque. Union Rusty Project supporters, who were impressively decked out in the club's colors and apparel, were out in force, cheering zealously in attempts to lift their side against familiar adversary Kaya Diggers4.

In the end, the exuberant encouragement from the club's faithful was enough, as Union Rusty Project held on to their first-half lead to send the players and their loyal fans into delirium. Kaya Diggers4 were handed their third loss in succession, sending them crashing to second-from-bottom in the League standings, much to their rivals' content.

The passion for the game was feverish on Sunday night, and despite disappointing results for Army Pilots, Kaya Diggers4 and their supporters, there is no doubt the players and the fans left the fields longing in anticipation for more exciting LBFL action.

The quest for glory continues this Sunday. Check www.footballalliance.com.ph for all fixtures, results and news in the United Football League. This is the LBFL. It's Dilli Game!

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DID YOU KNOW

VALENZUELA City used to be a town in Bulacan called Polo. Polo was established in 1623, and became the municipality of Valenzuela in 1903.
Cyril Jiordanie, Inquirer Research

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Ivler arraigned on murder rap

Judge: Road rage suspect to remain in hospital

By Julie M. Aurelio and Nancy C. Carvajal

ROAD RAGE SUSPECT JASON Ivler, who figured in a firefight with National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) agents who were serving a warrant for his arrest last month, pleaded not guilty yesterday to the murder of Renato Victor Ebarle Jr., the son of a Palace official.

During his arraignment before Judge Alexander Bahoy of the Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 76, Ivler was lying on a hospital stretcher, both wrists cuffed to the frame. He was dressed in a white hairnet and a pair of black pants.

He was surrounded by five body NBI agents and accompanied by his mother, Marlene Aguilar, who cried throughout the proceeding, and stepfather Stephen Estibert.

Ivler came from Quirino Memorial Medical Center (QMMC) where he has been confined for two gunshot wounds he sustained in the shoot-out with NBI agents on Jan. 16 at his mother's house in Silverdale Subdivision, Quezon City.

Below, unreadable, ordered that Ivler be returned to the hospital pending his discharge.

"Until such time that the accused is discharged and has fully recovered, he will be brought back to the hospital. The hospital is directed to furnish the court with a discharge order," he said.

That was after the prosecution, through lawyer Stanco Alcantara, asked the judge to immediately order the suspect's transfer to the Quezon City jail after his arraignment.

"He does not need 24-hours medical [illegible] there are a lot of doctors. It is about time that he be transferred to jail," Alcantara said.

But this was immediately opposed by Ivler's lawyer, Arthur Mirold Magtalong, who said this would only expose his client to health risks.

Full recovery first

"To avoid] prevent the prompt and speedy disposition of the case," Magtalong said as he added that Ivler should be allowed to fully recover first from his injuries.

The judge then called on Dr. Stanco Abany of QMMC to testify on the suspect's condition.

According to Abany, Ivler will had an open wound and sutures in the back which needed special medical attention.

"He cannot sit for long periods of time," the doctor said.

Ebarle Jr.'s father, Malacañang Undersecretary Renato Ebarle Jr., did not attend the court proceeding.

"It's still traumatic for him to see Ivler who killed his son. He's avoiding it in the meantime," Alcantara told reporters.

But in a written statement distributed to media, Ebarle Jr. said that he and his family have faith in the justice system as he thanked the police and the NBI which

PLAN #26

A CLOSE-UP of Jason Ivler's profile shows a tattoo which reads, "Hanging (sic) mentality." At right, Ivler waits for his arraignment while lying down on a stretcher as his mother, Marlene Aguilar, and PNP escorts look on. [illegible]

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Boratong asks court not to seize assets worth P900M

By DJ Yap

THE CAMP OF CONVICTED drug operator Alvin Ivan Boratong is seeking to block the confiscation and forfeiture of his property which he is believed to have acquired from running the infamous "shabu" line number in Pasig City.

Boratong and his wife, Sheryl Medina, filed a motion for reconsideration asking Judge Abraham Bersola of the Pasig Regional Trial Court Branch 154 to reverse his earlier order authorizing the confiscation of those assets, which the police had said amounted to P900 million.

Upon finding the Boratongs guilty of jointly operating the so-called "shabu mahjong" line way, the court had set hearings for the forfeiture of the couple's property as provided for under Section 23 of Republic Act 9165 or the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act.

In his last, it asked Boratong outlined how the confiscation process would go... from the identification of the assets for forfeiture to the presentation of evidence that those assets really belonged to the Boratongs, the rebuttal of the defense and the court's judgment.

"Of course, it goes without saying that the accused will be afforded due process by applying hand the nature and purpose of the confiscation/forfeiture proceedings," he said.

Bersola continued, "The accused will initially be informed of the nature of the proceedings and of the possible consequences thereof, i.e. that it is a proceeding intended to determine whether he owns [property] that can be considered as the proceeds of the offense for which he was convicted, and that his assets and [property which] are found to be manifestly out of proportion to his lawful income may be confiscated."

But in a Feb. 5 motion, the Boratongs, through their lawyer Raymond Fortun, asked the court to suspend the confiscation for "lack of procedural guidelines."

The couple said the procedure outlined by the court was "unspoken and has no basis." They also argued that a case for civil forfeiture filed against Boratong by the Anti-Money Laundering Council was still pending before a Manila court.

They added that the court could not proceed with the confiscation when the records of their criminal case had already been forwarded to the Court of Appeals for review and "without a final pronouncement of the guilt of the accused."

On July 8, 2009, the court sentenced the Boratongs to life imprisonment for violating Section 6 of R.A. 9165 and ordered Boratong to pay P5.6 million in fines and his wife, P1 million.

Sheryl was also convicted of a separate charge of drug possession as she was found with 51.12 grams of illegal narcotics when their personal aide Dionisio Campanano was raided by a police task force in February 2008.

FOR BURNING
Dozens of confiscated pirated pornographic DVD discs are reflected in the sunglasses of a Manila City Hall employee as one of several personnel who destroyed the discs by feeding them in a shredder. The discs were subsequently burned to melt their contents. NOYNOY

Man accuses 3 QC cops of robbery, extortion, files charges vs lawmen

By Julie M. Aurelio

THREE POLICEMEN HAVE been accused of robbing and trying to extort P220,000 from a motorist.

Charged before the Quezon City Regional Trial Court with robbery and extortion were SPO2 Reynaldo Hulatan, SPO1 Cipriano Amato and PO2 Marcelo Lardizo, all members of the Quezon City Police District.

Godfrey Antolano, City Prosecutor Jovita Hapsay recommended the filing of charges against the lawmen based on the complaint filed by their alleged victim, Andric Lawrence Co.

"The positive statements and allegations of the complainant [prevailed] over the bare denials of the respondents," Hapsay said in a two-page resolution dated recently.

He recommended bail of P100,000 each for the police officers' temporary liberty.

Co's complaint said that he was driving his car in Barangay Bahay Toro, Quezon City in October 2008 when he was stopped by the three policemen.

They searched his vehicle where they reportedly found an empty packet of Valium. Based on this, they accused him of drug possession, he added.

Co said he pleaded with the lawmen to let him go but they asked him for P20,000 to exchange the case bringing him to the police station.

They only released him after he withdrew P10,000 from an automated teller machine and gave the money to them, he said.

Co added that he later found out that someone had taken his Bulgari bracelet worth P70,000 which he had placed inside his bag.

In their defense, the policemen denied Co's allegations of robbery and extortion although they admitted that they had pulled his car over after they saw it weaving on the road.

Binay Jr. ousted as council majority floor leader

By Nina Calleja

RULES AFTER HE WAS stripped of the chairmanship of two committees, Makati Councilor Arjuman Erwin Binapar Binay Jr. was ousted as majority floor leader of the city council after he called for a break in yesterday's session and left the hall, accompanied by seven other councilors who were supportive of him.

The group never returned but minutes after their departure, Vice Mayor Romeo Mercado — who is running for mayor against Binay in the coming elections — and nine councilors aligned with him approved a draft resolution reorganizing the council's majority and minority bloc.

Councilor Elan Telemaco was later unanimously elected as the new majority floor leader.

The revamp, however, was promptly denounced by Binay, son of Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay who accused Mercado's camp of ignoring the rule of law.

"Mercado has totally ignored the law in advancing his unethical and self-serving agenda," the younger Binay said in a statement.

The reorganization capped a three-week deadlock between his camp and that of Mercado, resulting in the cancellation of previous council sessions.

During the opening of the session yesterday, a debate broke out between the younger Binay and Mercado after the former asked that the council vote for the court decision on whether the reorganization affecting council committees was legal.

Mercado and the other councilors had pushed for the reorganization, saying that Binay lacked basis ruling his position to pursue his political interests.

METRO BRIEFS

Judge dismisses Asistio's appeal

A JUDGE has dismissed the appeal of Caloocan mayoral candidate Luis "Baby" Asistio to reverse a lower court ruling ordering the removal of his name from the city's list of qualified voters, thereby, removing any impediment for incumbent city mayor Recto Echiverri to be proclaimed Mayor-Elect Echiverri in the event Feb. 15, Caloocan Regional Trial Court Branch 129 Judge Thelma Cadiles-Trinidad-Pe Aguirre dismissed Asistio's appeal after he failed to pay the required filing fee on time. Earlier, the Caloocan Metropolitan Trial Court ordered Asistio's name removed from the list of voters after it noted that the address he had listed in his certificate of candidacy did not exist. **Aneth T. Pahilnlot**

'Abalos not behind Buan's arrest'

THE CAMP of Mandaluyong Mayor Benhur Abalos yesterday had recognize to insinuations that he could be behind the arrest and indictment on drug charges of former Mayor Buan, who is running against him for mayor. Attorney Ricky Sahad, the city's public information officer, said Abalos must never be linked to screening the names of his opponents throughout his political career and that he did not intend to intervene. Sahad noted that in past interviews, Buan's camp had mentioned that the drug case could be the work of his political opponents and in some cases, even referred to Abalos directly. Buan is running under the Lakas-Kampi-Kambisig party while Abalos is running under the Mayon Demokratiko party against Abalos, who is the official candidate of Lakas-Kampi, and two other candidates. Buan was arrested last month on a Pasig trial court warrant for allegedly trying to sell cocaine to undercover agents of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency. On Monday, he pleaded not guilty to the charge of violating Sections 5 and 11 of the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act. **CJ Yap**

Lourdes School QC homecoming on Feb. 27

CLASS 1985 of Lourdes School Quezon City and the LSQC Alumni Association are inviting all alumni to a grand homecoming on Feb. 27, which will coincide with the school's 50th anniversary celebrations. Registration starts at 6 p.m. at the grade school quadrangle.

School says filing of civil case a betrayal of trust

By Nina Calleja

"BETRAYAL OF TRUST"

Officials of St. Andrew's School in Pandacan (SI) felt betrayed when they learned that a former student whom they have been financially supporting for several years decided to sue them and seek more than P5 million in damages, a lawyer representing the school told the lawyers yesterday.

"They were surprised to know about the case in the news because it was just two weeks ago when school officials and the boy's parents met to talk about [giving him some kind of support]," Antonio Bautista said. "They thought the case against them was betrayal of trust," he added.

Atty. Bell Cecilio, who is now 18 and a college freshman, filed the other day a civil case against a teacher and officials of the school after he was diagnosed with nerve damage which, according to doctors, was due to his exposure to mercury during a class science experiment when he was a 14-year-old freshman at St. Andrew's on Feb 16, 2006.

Despite the incident, Cecilio went on to finish his high school education in St. Andrew's.

Bautista said that since the mercury spill occurred, Cecilio has been receiving a monthly sum from the school for his recovery and college education. It never was also sent to his house to help him cope with daily living, he added.

Bautista, meanwhile, said they have yet to receive a copy of the case filed against the school by Cecilio.

Ivler arraigned on murder rap

From page A20

looked down and arrested Ivler.

"Our quest for justice will not be complete until our relief from the great pain of loss will not be fully managed, stolen and until all the persons who have committed or otherwise deserved the misfortune to extend the obstructions of his/her previously rested for obstruction of justice," he said.

Bautista said they would ask the court to let their two doctor-relatives refer to determine his real condition.

Dante Jr.'s sister, Clarissa Hurtado, said they would respect the court's decision regarding Ivler's transfer.

"We will just wait for the final determination. Of course, he should not be given special treatment because that would delay the administration of justice," she told reporters.

She added, "I hope the fine folks in this room will not offend the public sentiment." But she did not say who she was referring to.

The court has set a preliminary conference between both parties with the branch clerk of court on March 25 and 26. The proceeding, however, will not be open to the public.

The defense also manifested its opposition to Ubo's petition to allow Ivler to post bail but the judge said this would be taken up only after the pre-trial.

Hours before the arraignment, a crowd had gathered in front of QPRMC, waiting for Ivler to emerge.

Three people, however, stood out. One was a petite, pretty young girl dressed in a white tank top on which was written in purple letters: "2010."

Asked what the letters stood for, she said that they spelled Janvie. She described herself as Ivler's girlfriend.

Sending just a few feet away from their main race were dressed in black T-shirts. On the front of the shirt was a picture of Ivler while written on the back were the words: "Stopping murder (In the dark)." They said they worked for Aquilas. Ivler's employer.

But the three, including medicines who had competed in front of the hospital, were chased out of the theater as no Ivler when the NBI decided to bring him out of the facility by the back entrance "for security reasons."

"Philippine Prudential Life Insurance Company, Inc. to celebrate 47th anniversary"

The PHILIPPINE PRUDENTIAL LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY, INC. will hold its 47th Anniversary celebration on February 18, 2010 at the Manila Polo Club's Country Club in Mandaluyong City.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is expected to grace the occasion while Philippine Prudential Life President and CEO Gregorio G. Alvendia will honor top salespeople with awards.

Aptly themed "Your partner for 47 years, your partner for life," the event comes amidst record-high sales in all its life insurance lines. For 2009, gross sales reached P[illegible] million, a[illegible] a 42% growth from 2008.

The gathering would also unveil Philippine Prudential Life Insurance Company's inclusion into the prestigious SuperBrands affiliation, a distinction given to a brand that has achieved exceptional success in its branding efforts.

Later this year, Philippine Prudential Life Insurance Company will open three new retail offices to augment the seven existing outlets currently operating across the country. The life insurer will also launch eight new insurance plans, including an educational plan for children up to 10 years old.

Money forger, car thief shot dead by policemen

By Jeannette I. Andrade

TWO MEN ALLEGEDLY involved in stealing cars and manufacturing fake money were killed in a shoot-out with policemen before dawn yesterday.

Operatives of the Manila Police District's District 2 in Sta's, Tondo, identified the two as Enrique Chan alias "King," 43, a resident of Aguilar Street in Tondo, and a certain "Bogong."

Being specialists in counterfeit money while Bogong is into stealing motorcycles. They always worked [together] and carried guns with them," MPD station 2 chief, Supt. Ernesto Tendero, told the inquirer.

Tendergo said the pair had been placed under surveillance before but it was only yesterday that the police caught up with them after patrol operations were intensified following the week's thrill of a motorcycle owned by a policeman in Tondo.

Police reports showed that the shoot-out took place at around 12:45 a.m. yesterday in front of M. H. del Pilar Elementary school on Juan Abad Santos Avenue.

TWO MEN, were alleged to be a car thief and the other a counterfeiter of fake money, be dead after figuring in a shoot-out with policemen on Juan Abad Santos Avenue, Manila. [illegible]

Kim turns 68 amid talk of ill health

SEOUL—NORTH KOREANS celebrated "positively brilliant" leader Kim Jong-il's 68th birthday on Tuesday as questions persist abroad about his health and the future of the impoverished, nuclear-armed nation.

Depressed and chronically ill, Kim relies on rare, costly and sometimes outlawed remedies such as rhino's horn and the like of bear gall bladder, one South Korean official told The Associated Press. Another intelligence report said North Koreans have spent twice to Beijing since 2008 to buy prized remedies, spending more than $400,000 on one shopping trip.

Though unusually gaunt, Kim appears active and even cheerful in photos distributed by state media. Dressed in a heavy parka, he has been shown in several media guiding construction of a hotel, smiling a tense and even wandering a dance performance.

However, Kim is undergoing kidney dialysis and suffers from depression, said Cheong Seong-chang, a senior analyst at the private Sejong Institute think tank outside Seoul, citing a "very credible" source.

And though Kim's health is a tightly guarded secret, United States and South Korean officials believe Kim suffered a stroke in August 2008 that kept him out of the public eye for months. Kim's hospitalization sparked concern about succession, though he is still recuperating from a stroke.

Kim's health is of keen interest because he leads his 24 million people with absolute authority. There are concerns that his sudden death would trigger instability and a power struggle in a country staggered by poverty and economic woes.

His declining health has forced him to hasten the process of handing over power, Cheong said.

ILL HEALTH Koreans celebrate the birthday of their leader, Kim Jong-il (right photo), South Korean activists (left photo) at the heavily fortified border prepare to launch balloons containing anti-Kim leaflets. —AP

Kim has not publicly named any of his three sons to succeed him, but is said to favor the youngest, Jong Un, believed to be in his mid-20s.

Very little is known about Kim's son. No photos of him as an adult have surfaced, and even the South Korean government was unsure until last summer exactly how his name was spelled in Korean.

Reports abound that North Korean officials have traveled to Beijing to buy bear gall bladder, rhinoceros horn and musk, he said.

His extract from bears' gall bladders, drinks' horn and musk are prized for treating strokes.

The three remedies are among the most expensive and banned to flout in Oriental medicine. The rhino is endangered, with one horn fetching upwards of $5,000 in South Africa. Musk sells at nearly $900 for 1/32nd of a pound, Choi said.

There was no sign anything was amiss on the streets of Pyongyang, Banning the cold, four to six soldiers found on a street near a special exhibition of the leader's namesake "kimjongilia" flower, according to broadcaster APTN in Pyongyang.

At a celebratory gathering of party and military officials on Monday, Kim was described as a "great leader, brilliant commander," according to the Korean Central News Agency.

One of Pyongyang's most famous restaurants put mapping tards on the menu in honor of Kim's birthday, including tards soup, raw dishes made of tards and tards roast and raw, and tards porridge.

Kim himself provided "meticulous instruction" on how to breed and cook turtles, KCNA said.

Asians consider turtles, a symbol of longevity, a nutritious delicacy. —AP

WORLDBRIEFS

Mexican bishops hit drug war strategy

MEXICO CITY—Mexico's Roman Catholic bishops have joined in the growing criticism of anti-narcotic President Felipe Calderon's strategy, but done little to stem gang violence. The Mexican Council of Bishops said in a report released on Monday that the presence of thousands of troops on the streets and a corrupt judicial system raise human rights concerns. They said too many suspects had been paraded in front of the media before being charged and urged the government to speed up police reforms so that thousands of troops now leading the drug war could return to their barracks. Since taking office in 2006, President Felipe Calderon has deployed tens of thousands of troops to drug-trafficking hotspots across the country, ensuring a record body territory from traffickers. Gang violence has since increased and become more vicious, with beheadings and shootouts occurring daily. More than 15,000 people have died in violence tied to the drug trade in the past three years. AP

Maoist rebels kill 24 cops in India

CALCUTTA—A stunning attack by Maoist rebels that killed at least 24 police officers has raised fresh concerns over the Indian government's challenge to the rebels and exposed the insurgents' brutal thirst for power, a top leader of Maoist said on Tuesday. The bloody assault on Monday—the deadliest rebel attack on police in West Bengal state—came amid a new government crackdown on the militants, who are active in 20 of India's 28 states. More than 1,000 guerrillas attacked the heavily armed, defending local forces, setting the facility ablaze, killing two dozen police and stealing weapons. "Every attack of this kind exposes the true nature and character of the [Maoists]," Home Minister Palaniappan Chidambaram said in a statement. "Their goal is not open politics." Chidambaram, the organization is not going to a democratic republic has the right to take to violence to overpower the established legal authority." AP

Burma sentences 4 activists to hard labor

RANGOON—Military-ruled Burma (Myanmar) sentenced four activists to prison terms with hard labor on the same day a United Nations envoy arrived to assess progress on human rights in the country, the opposition said on Tuesday. The four women were arrested last month for handing out leaflets commemorating the 1988 anniversary of offering Buddhist monks alms. Rashi included religious literature, said Nyan Win, spokesperson for the opposition party headed by detained Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi. The women went to hold prayer services at Rangoon's Shwedagon pagoda but Suu Kyi's release. They were sentenced on Monday to two years imprisonment with hard labor, Nyan Win said. The judgment came as special UN envoy Tarlan Osre Gambisa arrived for a five-day visit to evaluate progress on reforms. AP

Obama mother-in-law likes White House life

WASHINGTON—President Barack Obama's mother-in-law liked her entire life in Chicago, so it was only natural that her move to the White House came with some reluctance. Try it for three months, her son-in-law says she barely suggested. A year later, it seems Marian Robinson is here to stay. She spends a lot of time looking after granddaughters Malia, 11, and Sasha, 8, but has been serving out a new life for herself, too. In the words of the press secretary, she's become "pretty absorbed in soaps." The widowed Mrs. Robinson has made friends and trips her friends over to the White House. She goes shopping on her own, enjoys visits to the Kennedy Center and takes Malia and Sasha to and from school just about every day—all while enjoying a level of anonymity that has Obama and her own daughter, first lady Michelle Obama, feeling both pleased and a bit envious at the same time. AP

Hottest temperature ever

WASHINGTON—Scientists have created the hottest temperature ever in the lab—4 trillion degrees Celsius—hot enough to break matter down into the kind of soup that existed microseconds after the birth of the universe. They used a giant atom smasher at the United States Department of Energy's Brookhaven National Laboratory in New York to knock gold ions together to make the extra-hot explosions—which lasted only for trillionseconds. Reuters

'Love' hormone may help autism symptoms

WASHINGTON—A hormone thought to encourage bonding between mothers and their babies may hinder social behavior in some adults with autism, French researchers said on Monday. They found patients who inhaled the hormone oxytocin paid more attention to expressions when looking at pictures of faces and were more likely to understand social cues in a game simulation. The researchers said in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. Reuters

Space station gets a room with a view

CAPE CANAVERAL—Astronauts above the International Space Station on Monday added an observation deck that will give residents of the orbital outpost a panoramic view of the station and Earth below. After struggling with some perplexing bolts, crew of the shuttle Endeavour used the station's robot arm to connect the Italian-made cupola to the newly delivered Tranquility connecting hub. Reuters

3 years needed to clear Haiti rubble

PORTAU PRINCE...IT WILL take three long years to clear the rubble left by Haiti's devastating earthquake, said President Rene Preval who admitted more he's will allowed to deep under concrete in one another neighborhoods.

In a rare exclusive sit-down interview, Preval told Associated Press Television News on Monday that Haiti faced a long reconstruction process that will result in fewer people living in the capital, then on Friday.

"It will take 1,000 trucks moving rubble for 1,400 days, so that's three years. And until we move our rubble, we cannot really build," Preval said.

Sitting in the airport police station that serves as the country's temporary government headquarters, Preval calmly laid out the difficulties of rebuilding an impoverished country amid aftershocks and the threat of more earthquakes.

He said the government had destroyed some hastily rebuilt structures in the capital, but he said that until structures housing plans could be completed, the

HUNDREDS of thousands of Haitians need not food, water and medicine but also tarpaulins, tents and toilets after a massive earthquake devastated their country. —AFP

government's ability to regulate reconstruction would be limited.

Asked about reporters' assertions that local corruption had interfered with the international aid effort, he replied: "It is possible that there have been irregularities."

"However," he said, "I should point out that the government isn't the direct manager of most of this humanitarian assistance."

He referred further questions to relief organizations and local and international government agencies engaged in food distribution.

International aid groups have taken pains to at least make Haiti's government the dealer hand of the relief. But director mayor's officers in Port-au-Prince have been put in control of many food coupon distribution, and some irregularities have been reported.

The president, whose five-year term is scheduled to end next year, has rarely spoken publicly with his cases people to the media since a 7.0-magnitude earthquake pummeled Haiti's capital city on Jan. 12.

More than 200,000 people were killed. The presidential palace and his main private residence were destroyed, as were most government buildings and the parliament. Of a 9,000-member United Nations peacekeeping force that guarantees his security.

Since then, Preval said on Monday, he has been staying with friends until a "light, earthquake-proof" structure can be built as an office in his home.

"Like you, I am nervous to be under cement," he said.

Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper on Monday said his country will speed up to $1.2 million to build Haiti's government a temporary base to replace official buildings damaged in the quake. AP

Vatican tells Irish bishops: Admit blame

ROME—A TOP VATICAN prelate has told Irish bishops at an extraordinary Vatican summit with Pope Benedict XVI they must admit their many blame in the worst age of generations of sex abuse of minors, or risk losing the faithful of Ireland's Catholics.

But the former bubble also how who helped expose the scandal doubted that any was hierarchy bemoaning would remain from the two days of talks behind closed doors in the Apostolic Palace.

Benedict's top aide, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, delivered a stinging homily at a Mass before Monday's talks decrying the "particularly abhorrent deeds" of some in the Irish church hierarchy although he didn't name any names.

Bertone, the Vatican's No. 2 who participated in the summit with Irish bishops from Irish dioceses, blasted the crisis to a "most dangerous point, that which touches the heart of believers, shaking their faith and threatening their ability to trust in God."

"It rattles faith," Bertone must acknowledge their own blame in the failures of truth," urged Bertone, the Holy See's secretary of state. He seemed that the evil could push faithful toward "disengagement and desperation."

A state report last year found that Church leaders in Dublin had spent decades protecting child-abusing priests from the law while many fellow clerics pretended not to see.

A separate inquiry documented decades of sexual, physical and psychological abuse of children and teens in Catholic-run schools, workhouses and orphanages.

The bishops kissed the Pope in a funereal gesture of respect before cameras were ushered out. The Vatican wasn't customary before the ceremonial start on Tuesday and hasn't released Benedict's remarks or the sessions, which began in the morning and were late this evening.

Cardinal Sean Brady, archbishop of Armagh and primate of all Ireland, described the talks as a first step on a journey toward "penance, renewal and reconciliation."

Bertone called for "humility" from the bishops. But Cleghorn Bishop Joseph Duffy had already said resignations were not on the summit agenda, a key victims' demand that church who involved in preventing pedophile priests step down.

That made Andrew Madden, who in 1995 became the first in Ireland to go public with an abuse lawsuit against the church, furious.

"It's clear that most of Ireland's bishops should go, because they conspired in covering up heinous crimes," Madden told The Associated Press in Ireland. "Most of them will cling to their positions regardless of the anguish this causes the victims." AP

Obama seeks return to campaign-style discipline

OBAMA

NOAH BOSTON—FACING CRITICism that United States President Barack Obama isn't connecting with the American people, the administration is reshaping its communications strategy with some of the ironclad discipline and outside-the-box thinking that made the Obama presidential campaign so successful.

Insiders say about talk that the president was sometimes overexposed during his first year in office, the White House now is more discriminating about how and when the president deals with media—and about whom he talks to when he does.

Aides say there's no formal overhaul of the administration's communications strategy as the president embarks on his second year in office.

But with Obama's poll numbers flat-lining, his agenda on the ropes and Democrats increasingly worried about losing ground in November's election when control of Congress will be at stake, the White House is taking an approach to getting out his message about the press, the president's accomplishments and goals that is at once more aggressive and more streamlined.

Dan Inchley

★ More direct, rapid response to criticism.

★ More events at which the president speaks directly to the public without the filter of the media, including town hall meetings around the country or such events as a recent online question-and-answer session streamed on YouTube and a televised live exchange with House Republicans.

★ Carefully choreographed interactions with the press. Unlike news conferences, which are unscripted and can cover many topics and put reporters in competition with the president for the spotlight, the Obama team is trying to place a premium on its media interactions. AP

The WORLD

Editor Lamberto B. Gocco

Top Taliban commander captured

ISLAMABAD—THE TALIBAN'S TOP MILITARY commander has been arrested in a joint CIA-Pakistani operation in Pakistan in a major victory against the insurgents as United States troops push into their heartland in southern Afghanistan, officials said on Tuesday.

Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the No. 2 behind Afghan Taliban founder Mullah Mohammad Omar and a close associate of Osama bin Laden, was captured in the southern Pakistani port city of Karachi, according to two Pakistani intelligence officers and a senior US official.

The officials spoke on conditions of anonymity because they were not authorized to release such sensitive information.

One Pakistani officer said Baradar was arrested 10 days ago with the assistance of the US and "was talking" to his interrogators. The New York Times first reported the arrest on its website late Monday.

Pakistan's spy agency has been accused in the past of protecting top Afghan Taliban leaders believed sheltering in the country, frustrating Washington. Moving against Baradar could signal that Islamabad increasingly views the Afghan Taliban, or at least some of its members, as the enemy.

The arrest also comes amid a new push by the US and its NATO allies to negotiate with Afghan Taliban leaders as a way to end the eight-year war in Afghanistan.

Pakistan will play an important role in that process because of its close links with members of the movement, which it supported before the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

Karachi is Pakistan's largest city and has been increasingly used as a possible hiding place for top Afghan Taliban commanders in recent months. It has a large population of Pashtuns, the ethnic group that makes up the Taliban, but it is on the Arabian Sea and far from the Afghan border.

Baradar heads the Taliban's military council and was elevated to the leadership after the 2006 death of military chief Mullah Akhtar Mohammed Usmani.

Baradar is known to coordinate the movement's military operations throughout the south and southwest of Afghanistan. His areas of direct responsibility stretches over Kandahar, Helmand, Nimruz, Zabul and Uruzgan provinces.

According to excerpts, Baradar was the deputy defense minister in the Taliban regime that ruled Afghanistan until it was ousted in the 2001 US-led invasion.

A Taliban spokesperson in Afghanistan said Baradar was still free, although he did not provide any evidence.

"We totally deny this rumor. He has not been arrested," Zabiullah Mujahid said by telephone. He said the report was Western propaganda aimed at undermining the Taliban fighting against an unfair invasion in the southern Afghan town of Marjah, a Taliban haven.

"The Taliban are having success with our jihad. It is to prove domination the Taliban who are on jihad in Marjah and all of Afghanistan," he said.

The New York Times said it learned of the operation against Baradar on Thursday but delayed reporting it at the request of White House officials who argued that publicizing it would end a valuable intelligence-gathering effort by making Baradar's associates aware of his capture. AP

US MARINES (left photo) evacuate an Afghan soldier who was wounded in a gas bottle with Taliban fighters in Marjah, a rebel stronghold in southern Afghanistan. One of the 11,000 soldiers taking part in the offensive, a US Marine (right photo) patrols an area in Taliban territory. AFP

Civilian death toll rises in Afghan offensive

MARJAH, AFGHANISTAN—THREE MORE Afghan civilians were killed in the assault on a southern Taliban stronghold, highlighting the toll on the population from an offensive aimed at ending them entirely.

The deaths—in three separate incidents—came after two rounds United States missiles struck a house on the outskirts of the town of Marjah on Sunday, killing 12 people, half of them children. Afghan officials on Monday said three Taliban fighters were in the house at the time of the attack.

About 15,000 Nato and Afghan troops are taking part in the massive offensive around Marjah—the linchpin of the Taliban logistical and opium poppy smuggling network in the south. US Marines are spearheading the assault.

The offensive is the biggest joint operation since the 2001 US-led invasion of Afghanistan, and a major test of a retooled Nato strategy to focus on preserving civilian lives, rather than killing insurgents.

But on the fourth day of an assault that could take weeks, the drumbeat of gunfire and controlled detonations of planted bombs sparked fears that civilians will bear the burden of the fight.

In view of the carnage that Nato confirmed on Tuesday, Afghan men came to assert Nato forces and ignored shouts and hand signals to stop, Nato said. Troops opened fire and killed them.

In the third incident, two Afghan men were caught in the crossfire between insurgents and Nato forces. Both were wounded and one died of his injuries despite being given medical care, Nato said.

Taliban fighters have stepped up counterattacks against US Marines and Afghan soldiers in Marjah, thwarting the allied advance to a crawl despite Afghan government claims the insurgents were broken and on the run.

Though Nato has only confirmed 13 civilian deaths, an Afghan human rights group said they had counted 39 civilians killed since the beginning of the operation. Four of those were people who were caught in the crossfire when they had to leave their homes for violence reasons.

"Date neighbors tell us that the bodies are outside and they want someone to pick them up. They say they're scared: if they go outside they will also be shot dead," said Ajmal Samil, the director of Afghanistan Rights Monitor. It was unclear whether Nato or insurgent forces were to blame for the deaths, he said.

In the streets, Taliban fighters appeared to be digging under the cover of darkness into compounds already deemed free of weapons and explosives, then opening fire on the Marines from behind US lines.

Explosions could be heard around noon on Tuesday as Marines endeavored to push further through streets littered with bombs and booby traps. AP

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THIS video homage of music student Neda Agha-Soltan, which became the iconic image of Iranian resistance, is chosen winner of a George Polk Award.

Unnamed filmers of protester in Iran win US journalism prize

NEW YORK—THE UNNAMED PEOPLE who captured on video and made public the shooting death of an Iranian protester have been chosen as winners of a George Polk Award, the first time the journalism prize has honored work produced anonymously.

Other winners of the 2009 Polk Awards, which were announced on Tuesday in New York, include David Rohde, a New York Times correspondent recognized for a five-part series detailing his kidnapping and imprisonment by the Taliban, and David Cohen, whose New Yorker magazine piece throwing into doubt the guilt of an executed convict sparked a national outcry.

The awards, presented by Long Island University, are considered among the top prizes in United States journalism. They were created in 1949 in honor of CBS reporter George W. Polk, who was killed while covering the Greek civil war.

The curator of the awards, John Darnton, said in a statement that the footage from Iran, which anonymously recorded and distributed, had been seen by millions of people and had become "an iconic image of the Iranian resistance."

"This award celebrates the fact that, in today's world, a brave bystander with a cell phone camera can use video-sharing and social networking sites to deliver news," he said.

The video of the death of music student Neda Agha-Soltan, shot during protests over Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's disputed reelection, made her name a rallying cry for the opposition and sparked international outrage at the harsh response of security forces.

Rohde received a Polk Award for foreign reporting for "Held by the Taliban," which covered his seven-month ordeal in Afghanistan and Pakistan and his daring escape.

Grunin's article "Trial by Fire" dissected the Texas case against Cameron Todd Willingham and raised questions about the arson investigation methods that were used to convict him of setting fire to his home and killing his three daughters. The awards' announcements said the piece "may be the first thoroughly documented case of the execution of an innocent man under the modern American judicial system." AP

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ERC sets public consultations to assess possible refund

By Amy R. Remo

MANILA ELECTRIC CO., THE COUNTRY'S BIGGEST power distributor, may have overcharged its customers by at least P6 billion for the years 2004 and 2007, according to the Commission on Audit.

In a report submitted to the Energy Regulatory Commission, COA said erroneously imposed overcharges amounting to P3.49 billion and P2.92 billion for 2004 and 2007, respectively, were not considered recoverable from customers as these were "not reasonable

CONTI

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New investors to transform MRC Allied into power firm

By Doris C. Dumlao

A SON OF TYCOON LUCIO TAN AND an investment fund manager are infusing close to P5 billion worth of combined assets and cash in listed Allied Banking Corp. to transform the publicly listed firm into a power generation holding company.

Lucio "Bong" Tan Jr. is working on the acquisition of a "semi-public" power plant in Luzon with a capacity of more than 200 megawatts and annual sales of $60 million as his counterbutton at equity into MRC Allied within the next three months, the company's majority shareholder, Benjamin Ritratiga, told reporters yesterday.

Aside from Tan, Ritratiga said another strategic investor—a fund manager who will come in as a passive stockholder—has agreed to pump in about P1.4 billion in fresh equity into MRC Allied within the next 30 days. The proceeds could be used to expand its businesses or, listed to the power sector, he added.

He said Tan would likely contribute a power plant worth about P3.5 billion into MRC Allied. Two prospective power plants being considered by Tan are economical in the Luzon grid and are up for a negotiated sale after two failed biddings in the past.

"You'll be very surprised at what's going to come into MRC. There's a shock factor because you'll think that company is not available. A company that can't be taken over will be taken over," Ritratiga said.

MRC Allied was supposed to hold its annual stockholders' meeting yesterday but was unable to meet a quorum. Ritratiga nevertheless updated shareholders and the media on the plans for the company.

Ritratiga said Tan favored a power plant using "clean" energy. Even if the group would end up with a coal-fired plant, he said the firm would use clean coal technology since likely being heavily taxed coal.

"What we want to happen is to acquire and build as many power plants as we could with a vision toward coal and renewable mainly fuel," he said, noting that it was a good time to shift to the power generation business now that the country's capacity would not catch up with rising demand.

The use of rubber oil for power generation would also be a possibility Ritratiga said, noting this would be cheaper but just as effective as bunker fuel.

Meanwhile, he said the additional money to be infused by the other strategic investor could be used for other businesses in support of the power business' generation. He said the options could range from real mining to cured fabrications.

Also part of the plan is to tap a foreign group to operate and manage the plant. "But we'll only contract a management from outside as existing facility to [open so that it will

VIEW INVESTING 01

Lucio Tan Jr., fund manager to contribute P5B

Petron gets SEC nod to issue shares

By Amy R. Reyes

THE SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMmission has allowed Petron Corp. to offer 50 million preferred shares, with an over-subscription option for another 50 million shares.

The recent sale was issued last Friday Petron said in a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange.

This will allow Petron, the company's biggest oil refiner and retailer, to raise as much as P10 billion that it can use to finance major capital investment projects this year, particularly its aggressive retail expansion and refinery upgrades.

"The proceeds from our issuance will fund our capital expenditures with the goal of enhancing our market dominance and executing Petron's growth momentum for many years to come," said Petron chair and CEO Ramon S. Ang.

The perpetual preferred shares are being offered from Feb. 13 to 26 at P100 a piece. The shares will be listed on the local bourse on March 5.

According to Petron, the preferred shares are cumulative, non-voting, non-participating, non-convertible and perpetual.

Ital-Thai group sells stake in Cyber Bay

THE CONSTRUCTION ARM OF Ital-Thai group has sold its remaining stake in Cyber Bay Corp. more than a decade after it launched Coastal Bay development project in the Philippines.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday, Cyber Bay said Italian-Thai Development Public Co. Ltd. sold 877.5 million shares in Cyber Bay equivalent to about 14.25 percent to a company called Primex Commerce Holdings Inc.

Antichet group, Centaria Group Ltd., likewise sold 584.5 million shares or about 9.49 percent to the same buyer.

The shares were sold through a special block sale executed at the PSE last Jan. 22. Jose Miguel Corp. president Ramon S. Ang earlier confirmed that he acquired the additional stake in Cyber Bay Corp. in his personal capacity.

Some 1.46 billion of the 6.16-billion outstanding shares of Cyber Bay changed hands through a special block sale at P0.12 a share that day, valuing the 23.7-percent stake at P175.3 million.

Based on the disclosure yesterday, Primex Commerce was incorporated in October last year. It is an investment company with interests in real estate as well as building and construction, warehouse, factories, and other structures. It has an authorized capital stock of P60 million. It has five incorporators owning 20 percent each: Jose Wingkee Jr., Jeanley Sanchez, Bernardo Abadesco, Pacita Ong and Arnulfo Sagun.

The Ital-Thai group, for its part, used to control majority of the Coastal Bay project under a controversial joint venture with state-controlled Public Estates Authority but has since sold its stake. Ital-Thai's assets at the height level of 70 percent after the entry of a new group led by Ang, who became also Cyber Bay chair.

One of the biggest civil engineering contractors in Southeast Asia, Ital-Thai was originally supposed to develop the reclamation area during the Ramos regime. But the succeeding Estrada administration felt that the government did not get a good deal out of the project and ordered a renegotiation of the contract. Doris C. Dumlao

Aboitiz buys Ro-Ro vessels for $15M

By Paolo G. Montecillo

ABOITIZ TRANSPORT SYSTEMS Corp. is spending about $15 million for the acquisition of two new vessels as part of the company's efforts to modernize its fleet.

The company said in a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday that it had agreed to buy two roll-on, roll-off passenger vessels—the 500 Sunflower Express from The Diamond Ferry Co. Ltd. of Oita, Japan, and the 400 Sunflower Wahiki from Kansai Kisen Kaisha of Osaka, Japan.

The latter said the used ships would cost $7.5 million each. Each can carry 400 20-foot cargo container vans and 2,000 passengers. Both ships are expected to arrive next month.

"Strong toward operational re-

continued from page B1

and necessary in the delivery of distribution services."

Those included, among others, employee pension and other benefits.

In a briefing yesterday, BIR executive director Francis Jose said the more than P6 billion included by Meralco is in operating expenses that COA wanted to disallow for 2004 and 2005. It may be refunded to consumers should the commission decide to uphold the countermove made by the said agency.

However, he said the COA results would have to be subjected to public consultations before the ERC could deliberate and decide on the issue. The ERC has directed all parties involved in the case to submit their respective comments within 15 days.

The COA report was meant to scrutinize Meralco's books after the ERC earlier called for an audit of the utility to find out if it had overcharged consumers.

The government audit report also said that Meralco booked several items in excess of what was allowed by law of P1.68 billion in 2004 and P1.33 billion in 2005, or P3.01 billion for the two years.

Aside from the disputed operating expenses worth more than P6 billion, COA said the excess profit was computed without "certain items that should not have been included in the computation of Meralco's revenues."

According to the report, there was an excess in distribution revenues because of certain property and equipment "recovery items" amounting to P2.7 billion and P3.18 billion for 2004 and 2005, respectively. But some not considered by COA as part of the rate base as these were not used or were useful in the distribution operations.

Stocks end flat in thin trading

LOCAL STOCKS HELD UP THIS FRIDAY IN thin trading while bargain hunting sentiment started to wane due to lack of fresh catalysts.

The main share Philippine Stock Exchange index gained 4.47 points or 0.16 percent to close at 2,967.71.

The property, mining/oil, holding firms and financial sectors showed up the index while the industrial and services counters weighed it down.

There were 93 advancers as against 53 decliners and 46 unchanged stocks in a still modest value turnover of P2.29 billion.

Among the gainers were Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., Century Peak Metal & Building Corp., EPPG Corp., Universal Robina Corp., Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co. and Philex Mining Corp.

On the other hand, the share prices of Manila Jockey Corp., Abacus Consolidated Holdings Corp., Ayala Land Inc. and Banco de Oro Universal Bank Inc. were unchanged. Beryl C. Bautista

COA uncovers P6.4B ...

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New investors to transform . . .

From page B1

he complementary," he said.

With these plans, Moreno said MRC Allied could start making profits this year. "If he [Tan] brings in an existing power plant, that will generate income from day one," he said.

Shares of MRC Allied have surged 65 percent since the start of the year as talks of the planned backdoor listing of Tan's new business. It has traded between a high of P1.66 and a low of P0.99 in the last 30 days.

Yesterday, however, its share price fell by 4.1 percent to close at P0.93 a share.

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Mabuhay MILES

PNB

Double-digit growth seen for exports, employment

By Michelle V. Bunoa

THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT Bank expects a double-digit increase in the Philippines' export earnings and employment this year as a result of improving global economic conditions.

In its newly released report, ADB said exports would likely increase by 14.6 percent to $56.35 billion this year, rebounding from the 23-percent contraction registered last year. The expansion is attributed to a recovery in global demand for goods and services.

ADB said the recovery of the Philippines' export sector would be continuous with the rebound of exports of other developing Asian economies.

"Recent improvement in export performance bodes well for a full recovery in the Philippines in the third quarter of the Asian economies," the multilateral lender said in its paper, "Exports and the Global Crisis: Still Alive, Though Not Quite Kicking Yet."

ADB said the Philippines has a very high "employment elasticity of exports" at 0.66 percent. This means that for every percentage increase in exports, total employment in the economy rises by 0.66 percent.

Thus, the foreign lender has projected that employment in the Philippines will grow by 12.2 percent this year.

Latest data from the National Statistics Office showed that unemployment rate eased to 7.1 percent of the country's total labor force as of October 2009. This was higher than the 6.8 percent rate in the same month of the previous year.

ADB said a rebound in the export sector would also benefit other sectors, particularly those that still rate materials to exporting firms.

The normalization of the country's exports last year, which led to layoffs by some electronics manufacturing firms, was blamed on the global economic crisis. Recession in major export markets, including the United States and European countries, led to lower demand for non-essentials, including electronics.

Electronics accounts for more than 50 percent of the Philippines' exports.

Slowdown exports last year was largely blamed for the slowdown of the country's economic output. The country's gross domestic product, grew by only 0.9 percent from the previous year's 3.8 percent.

DOF: French list need not concern RP

Gov't works to get RP off roster of 'tax havens'

By Reuterd M. Dumlao

THE FINANCE GOVERNMENT'S list of 38 countries accused of serving as tax havens, including the Philippines, need not be a cause for concern, a finance official said.

Finance Undersecretary Gil S. Beltran said in an interview that the French tax list was different from another list drawn up last year by the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

According to news reports from Paris, the French government is planning to raise to 50 percent, from the current maximum of 33 percent, taxes on dividends, interests and income from paid by French firms to people or other firms that maintain presences in countries perceived to be tax havens.

"What they want is for the Philippines to have a low guarantee and compliance with international standards [against tax havens]," Beltran explained. "Bills are already pending in both chamber of Congress."

The Philippines may soon be taken to task some for the Philippines, the official added.

"The Philippines will not be taken out of such lists until we have the time they want," he said, referring on the proposed revised tax law and exchange of information on tax matters.

Last year, former President Joseph Estrada filed Senate Bill No. 3210 while House Speaker Prospero C. Nograles filed House Bill No. 6508, both aimed at the amendments the Tax Code for the country to make good on its commitments to comply with international standards upheld by the OECD.

In April, the OECD placed the Philippines on a blacklist of countries that were considered tax havens due to lack of such commitments.

But the DECD later removed the country from the list following a written promise by the Philippine government to abide by the globally accepted tax standard.

The Philippines and 22 Finance Ministers at their Berlin meeting in 2004 and by the United Nations Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters during a meeting in 2008, signaled its commitment to exchange information upon request—"to all tax matters by the administration and enforcement of domestic tax law without requirement or bank secrecy for tax purposes."

Beltran said he submits the DOF's proposed amendments to the Tax Code related to DECD's model agreement on exchange of tax information.

One DOF proposal is for the expansion of the authority of the Commissioner of Internal Revenue Commissioner to inquire into bank deposits for the purpose of providing information upon the request of foreign tax authorities.

Unilab breaks into ₱400-M drug mart

By Abigail L. Ho

LOCAL DRUG FIRM UNITED Laboratories Inc. is preparing to break into the P400-million Azithromycin market in the country by offering its generic version of the popular antibiotic by next month.

Jose Maria Tebora, Unilab corporate vice president for legal services, said the company's Zenith brand would compete directly with Pfizer Inc.'s Zithromax.

"This antibiotic is still expensive even with the [imposition of the maximum drug retail price], which is why we want to launch our own version of it. The market is already worth around P400 million," he said.

He noted that while Pfizer held a patent on the dihydrate version of the drug, Unilab's Zenith would be a monohydrate, keeping it from infringing on Pfizer's patent.

Sandra, the generic drug subsidiary of Novartis, was also selling its own version of the antibiotic in monohydrate form, he related.

He said Unilab also planned to launch within the year its own version of the drug Pregabalin, which is used to treat seizures and diabetic neuropathic pain.

Pfizer sells the drug under the tradename Lyrica, and is selling it under the brand Lyrica, he said.

"But Pfizer's patent is only on the method of use, and not on the molecule, product or process. We have tested positive on things so we can launch before the end of the year," he said.

Unilab and Pfizer are currently engaged in a patent war over the anti-cholesterol drug Atorvastatin Calcium, which the companies are selling under the Avamine and Lipitor brands, respectively.

Pfizer filed for an injunction against Unilab's Atorvastatin when the local pharmaceutical firm released Avamine in the market, claiming that it held the patent for Atorvastatin Calcium. The Makati Regional Trial Court did not grant Pfizer's request.

Pfizer, on the other hand, filed a patent invalidation case against Pfizer with the Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines, alleging that Pfizer was engaged in "evergreening" in patents on the drug, or making minor modifications to the drug compound to ensure almost perpetual patent renewal.

The case had yet to be resolved.

Electricity supply stable but rates may rise

By Amy R. Remo

METRO MANILA AND provinces in Luzon have been spared from two to three hour rotating brownouts, after San Miguel Energy Corp. reached an agreement with French firm Suez Tractebel to begin operating the 340-megawatt Ilijan combined cycle power plant in Batangas.

"We were able to address the power situation and we can ensure the public that there will be no brownouts in Luzon up to summer," Energy Secretary Angelo T. Reyes yesterday said in a briefing.

Carlito Claudio, VP for operations at the National Grid Corp. of the Philippines, said the facility would be able to run at optimum capacity of 1,140 MW only in the next 20 hours, or by early Thursday at the latest. Within a week, the capacity can be increased to its maximum 1,400MW, he said.

Also, the 650-MW Malaya facility, which is running at low capacity during peak hours, will soon run at lower capacity, Claudio added.

According to Claudio, the available capacity yesterday, even without the Ilijan facility, was at 7,100 MW, while projected peak demand was at 6,600 MW—which meant that the Luzon grid had power reserves of about 500 MW.

As a result, the Luzon grid is now in "white alert," which means that the island has enough reserves to address a possible breakdown of a power plant, Reyes said.

BOC, Shell may be in for a long court fight

THE DISPUTE BETWEEN THE Bureau of Customs and Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. may drag on for years, and may even go all the way up to the Supreme Court, according to Finance Secretary Margarito B. Teves.

Facing that prospect, Teves reiterated a Department of Finance proposal for Shell to put the disputed tax payment of P7.3 billion in an escrow account "for sure of settlement."

The Finance chief said the DOF, parent agency of the BOC and the Bureau of Internal Revenue, was amenable to Shell making the proposed escrow deposit.

"The point is that the amount is readily available," he said. "If the issued is resolved in Shell's favor, then they keep the money. If [it] is in favor of the government, it would be easy to collect."

Teves said that while Shell has not turned down the proposal outright, the oil refiner is insisting on addressing the matter through surety bonds.

"But the Court of Tax Appeals upheld the BOC and the BIR ruling that Shell should pay up," he said.

Shell gained a few days' respite over the BOC's plan to confiscate some of the company's goods in its Batangas facility through a January warehousing order issued by the Batangas City Regional Trial Court.

"We have to follow that," he said. "But after the TRO lapses, [Shell can still go] to the Supreme Court."

The BOC has been trying to collect some 1000-00 customs' caused gasoline brought in 2008. Shell maintains that CO1 is an input used to make a blend of unleaded gasoline, but the BOC insists it is a finished product and thus subject to excise tax.

Reuterd M. Dumlao

16 firms eye tax-free sugar imports

By Nico T. Ochoterina

ABOUT 16 PRIVATE FIRMS, among them Coca-Cola Bottlers Inc., have expressed interest in importing sugar tax free.

According to the National Food Authority (NFA), which is overlooking the importations, a unit of industrial processing and trading companies have brought bid documents in order to participate in the Feb. 25 bidding.

Now Funding the NFA will auction off rights to import 60,000 tons of sugar at zero tariff.

The 60,000 tons, which have to be delivered by May 15, is part of the 150,000 tons of sugar to be imported this year. The government hopes to stabilize prices of the sweetener.

"That is a good indication of interest in the private sector," said Rodimadoe Amoria, executive director of industry group the Philippine Sugar Millers Association Inc.

Earlier, SRA director for marketing operations Remico B. Rimando told reporters that the grains agency could export through quedan (warehouse receipt) swapping if firms to proceed with the import plan.

"Being able to import sugar without tariff is an advantage," he said.

Dealing a pre-bidding conference, the SRA said industrial users like soft drink makers could collectively import 20,000 tons of sugar. Each individual user may bring in as much as 5,000 tons.

Some 22,000 tons may be brought in for retailers and repackers. About 12,000 tons will go to institutional users, such as hotels and bakeries, and the rest, or 8,000 tons, will be distributed to local processors.

Retailers, institutional users said food processors may only import 1,000 tons of sugar.

Treasury awards T-bonds worth ₱2.5B

THE BUREAU OF THE TREASURY yesterday awarded P2.5 billion in fresh issues of 10-year T-bonds.

Investor investors asked for too much of an increase in yields, the partial award yesterday was barely 20 percent of the original P8.5 billion offer.

The bonds issued reflected an coupon rendered a total of P12,893 billion.

At a coupon rate of 7.75 percent, yesterday's floor was 2.4 basis points less than the 7.77% percent investors put on the previous 10-year T-bond issued in August 2009.

National Treasurer Roberto B. Tan said the government still had plenty of cash following the issuance of $1.5 billion in global bonds last month.

Tan said the main purpose of yesterday's auction was to make available fresh supply of 10-year debt paper which could be re-issued.

The last time the BTr offered 10-year notes was in October at P8.5 billion, but all bidders were rejected as investors asked for high yields in anticipation of more supplies.

Back then, the National Food Authority was preparing for a P6-billion issue.

If the BTr made a full award yesterday, the yield would have been pegged at a coupon rate of 8 percent.

With a full award, the average yield would have settled at 7.900 percent or 13.2 basis points higher than the 7.774 percent paid for the previous issue.

The Bureau of the Treasury plans to issue a total of P130.5-billion in debt paper in the first quarter, two-thirds of which would be in bonds.

Treasury has almost double the P65 billion borrowing program for the previous quarter, which the BTr reserved mainly with long-term T-bonds.

For 2010, the government has initially set a budget deficit of P325 billion, which is expected to be adjusted higher even though finance officials want to keep it below P300 billion. Reuterd M. Dumlao

SMDC income surged to ₱1.8B in '09

SM DEVELOPMENT CORP. (SMDC) reported a consolidated net income of P1.8 billion, growing 31.6% from P56.8 million in 2008.

The SMDC net income from real estate operations amounted to P1.5 billion, an increase of 3% percent from P1.1 billion in the same period the previous year.

Consolidated revenue reached P1.3 billion, 33% percent higher than that of 2008.

Earnings before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortization amounted to P2.1 billion, for an 18% margin of departure.

Realized revenue from real estate sales reached P3.6 billion (unique) 73 percent to P5.2 billion from P3.1 billion in 2008.

For the whole of 2009, SMDC pre-sold 4,692 residential units worth approximately P13.5 billion. Compared to the same period in 2008, the number of units presold increased by 133 percent.

The said income growth by the day, encouraged by the enthusiasm and growing acceptance that SMDC is recovering from the market," said Roger R. Gabriel, SMDC president. "Our innovative business model and focused strategy are starting to unwind to a new frontier in Philippine residential development."

By end 2009, SMDC had a roster of 32 projects from only seven in 2008.

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
National Capital Region
DOLE-NCR Building, 864 Shaw Blvd., Mandaluyong City

NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATIONS FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMITS (AEPS)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/employers have filed with the Regional Office applications for Alien Employment Permits:

Name and Address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National (Citizenship)	Position
ASIA INTERNATIONAL LANSA PACIFIC LTD. (107 Tordo 1, 17th Corporate Center, 6780 Ayala Ave., Makati City)	Lee, Jeremiah (Irish)	Country Manager, Philippines
KEY PAD, INT'NL ENTERPRISES (105 Aurora Bl., Brgy. Addition Hills, Mandaluyong City)	De Sao Lee (Kenya)	General Manager
VERIZON COMMUNICATIONS (PHILIPPINES), INC. (12F Tower 2, The Enterprise Center, 6766 Ayala Ave., Makati City)	Elizabeth Frank Lucero (Kenya)	Service Manager, Operations
ARTA ENGLISH HOME SERVICES, INC. (2/F Greenhouse Place, 219 Commonwealth Ave., Quezon City)	Jeanette Lee (Kenya)	International Account Executive
ALLTECH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY CORPORATION (Unit 2-D, Eastside Corporate Plaza, 7 Annapolis St., Brgy. Greenhills, Mandaluyong City)	Jamie Robert Macpelli (Kenya)	General Manager
DAVID & HANK CONSULTING SERVICES, INC. (Unit 1-D, 8 and Hugo Bldg., 8228 Ave., Bangkal, Quezon City)	Ryungwon Han (Korea)	Marketing Consultant
EMERSON CAPITAL LIMITED (12/F Tower 2, The Enterprise Center, 6766 Ayala Ave., Makati City)	Zhenmin Zhou (China)	Senior Technical Consultant (Service Office)
BOOK TO PEOPLE NGO PHILS., INC. (UP Sc Communication Center, Diliman, Quezon City)	Shafiqul Alam Mohammad (Bangladesh)	General Manager
PHILIPPINE ENTERTAINMENT PORTAL, INC. (3/F Mercom Corporate Plaza, 5 Ortigas Jr. Ave., Ortigas Center, Pasig City)	Hyungsoo Kim (Korea)	Game Manager
SUNBRIDGE PHILIPPINES, INC. (11/F-L Salcedo St., Legaspi Village, Makati City)	Frankfurter Edenhardt (Germany)	Vice President
SAFETY-KLEEN SYSTEMS PHILS., INC. (2/F Mercom Corporate Plaza, 5 Ortigas Jr. Ave., Ortigas Center, Pasig City)	Tomokazu Masuda (Japan)	Technical Advisor
LOTTOMATIC HOLDING PHILIPPINES, INC. (Mezzanine Level, Ayala Triangle, Ayala Ave., Makati City)	Shin Itoh (Japan)	Vice President for Retail Operations
FIRST SOURCE SOLUTIONS LIMITED (12/F Philamlife Bldg., Paseo De Roxas cor. Legaspi St., Legaspi Village, Makati City)	Ravi Sonja Nambiar (India)	Country Manager, Philippines
MOTHER & CHILD ASIA PACIFIC PTE. LTD. - MANILA BRANCH (2/F Tower 2, The Enterprise Center, 6766 Ayala Ave., Makati City)	Akira Ishikawa (Japan)	General Manager for Service and Child Division
ELI LILLY (PHILIPPINES) INCORPORATED (12/F Philamlife Tower, 8767 Paseo de Roxas, Makati City)	Wayne Sue Lee (Kenya)	General Manager
SAFETY-KLEEN SYSTEMS PHILS. INC. (2/F Mercom Corporate Plaza, 5 Ortigas Jr. Ave., Ortigas Center, Pasig City)	Takashi Sato (Japan)	Vice President
PURE SKIN BEAUTY LAB, INC. (2/F Asia Trade Tech Center, Makati City)	Kazuhisa Lee (Japan)	Sole Owner

If you have any information/objection to the above mentioned application/s please communicate with the Regional Director.

ATTY. RAYMUNDO S. HORMILLA
Regional Director

Lottery and fireworks

THERE IS SERIOUS TURMOIL brewing among the country's online lotto system operators.

The Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, according to the grapevine, is hatching a new agreement that would give Intercontinental Betting "Bobby" Ong-pico's Philweb.com a nationwide license for SMS- and Internet-based betting for its lottery games.

But other IT firms with existing contracts with PCSO get wind of the discussions and are now up in arms, realizing this could jeopardize their existing mandates (and income, of course).

Specifically, Pacific Online, Philippine Gaming Management Corp. and Stronghold Financial Voice Network Inc. had threatened by the emerging deal between PCSO and Philweb as this could cut them off from the online betting business.

A recent announcement by Pacific Online to invest P200 million for "total lotto" project, for instance, was widely seen as an assertion of its license as the exclusive lotto system provider in Visayas and Mindanao.

The dispute is on the brink of spilling over to the courts and has even trickled down to congressional probes.

For instance, the IT provider of PGMC (which holds the license to license for Lotto), Wolfpack, is affiliated with local telecom giant, PLDT, which in turn is part owner of Philweb.

As such, Wolfpack has supposedly been told to "back off" from its project with Pacific Gaming. Boris C. Dacuhao

SLEx tug-of-war

THE CORPORATE rivalry between the First Pacific and San Miguel groups has indeed spilled over into the tollway business in a big way.

Industry sources said downsizing San Miguel Properties' coming in to the strategic partner of Star Tollway Corp. in its attempt to purchase the Philippine National Construction Corp.'s 20-percent stake in the company does appear to be a reaction of the Ayala group to the exclusive talks system provider in Visayas and Mindanao.

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Toyota lures back spooked US buyers

Hit hard by recall crisis, Japanese firm outlines major incentive campaign

ORLANDO, Fla.—TOYOTA MOTOR CORP is planning an aggressive incentive program for March to lure US customers rattled by a damaging product safety crisis, executives said on Monday.

The world's largest automaker, reeling from the largest recall in its history, said most of the vehicles at its US showrooms have been repaired and are back for sale, adding it is evaluating a range of options to support new month's sales.

"We are studying everything," US sales chief Bob Carter told reporters after a meeting with nearly 300 Toyota dealers at the National Automobile Dealers Association convention. "All are under evaluation."

Don Esmond, senior vice president of Toyota Motor Sales USA, said Toyota will be in aggressive as needed to help dealers keep existing customers and attract new ones.

But the executives said the company had yet to make decisions on the new marketing push and declined to elaborate on the options being considered.

At issue is whether or not the company's sell-developing plans and Toyota is considering offering a $1,000 rebate in addition to the current $1,000 to cash incentives for returning Toyota customers.

Toyota's current $1,000 in "loyalty" bonus matches incentives offered by General Motors Co, Ford Motor Co, Chrysler and Hyundai Motor Co to lure Toyota customers.

Other options Toyota is considering include a free maintenance program—such as oil changes and regular services...and a new warranty program that at least matches Hyundai's market-leading 10-year, 100,000-mile powertrain warranty, the source said.

The concessions said 'most of Toyota's investment of 531,000 vehicles involved in the recall have had their pedals repaired and by the end of February almost all of them will be back in showrooms.

Toyota's US sales dropped 16 percent in January in the lowest level in more than a decade after it suspended sales of about half of its inventory of vehicles including the popular Camry and Corolla sedans, due to safety recalls over potentially sticky accelerator pedals.

Overall US industry sales were up 6 percent last month.

US auto sales are ranking at about 14.7 million to 15.8 million units on the seasonally adjusted rate for February, Carter said.

Toyota's sales will be down in February, he said but added in share of the US market was "holding up" and "stable" despite the recall crisis.

Toyota, No. 2 to US sales behind GM, saw its US market share fall to 14 percent in January—its lowest level since January 2006—from 17 percent for full-year 2009.

Toyota has recalled more than 8.5 million vehicles globally due to the risk that sticky accelerator pedals or loose floormats may result in unintended acceleration. Reuters

Asian shares gain

TOKYO—ASIAN SHARE Markets posted solid gains on Tuesday with Australian stocks boosted by upbeat earnings from leader Macquarie, while the euro held its ground as Greece was given 30 days to show to deficit plans were on track.

Chinese stock in Hong Kong and Shanghai remained closed for the Lunar New Year and with US markets also shut on Monday, gains in Asia were light as investors continued to weigh the fixed risks in the euro zone and the impact of China's latest credit tightening.

Stocks in Australia gained 0.5 percent and the MSCI Index of Asian shares excluding Japan rose 0.4 percent, reaching its highest level in nearly two weeks, with financials and metals stocks leading the gains.

In Japan, the benchmark Nikkei edged up 0.3 percent and held just above the 10,000 mark for the third session in a row, although the mood was fragile due to China and Greece.

"Looking at the type of shares people are buying, it seems like the risks are tilted toward the downside rather than the upside," said Kiyoshi Wada, chief fund manager at MS Investments.

He said there were signs investors may be shifting funds into high-dividend shares in defensive sectors such as pharmaceuticals and telecommunications and away from some China-linked shares. Reuters

Microsoft unveils new version of mobile platform

BARCELONA—MICROSOFT UNVEILED on Monday a new version of its mobile operating system as the US software giant seeks to regain lost ground in the highly competitive smartphone market.

Chief executive Steve Ballmer presented the Windows Phone 7 Series at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, Spain, ending months of speculation about what Microsoft had in store for the industry's biggest trade show.

"We're taking a step, I think a big step," Ballmer said, adding that devices fitted with the new software would be available in time for the winter holiday shopping season. "I'm enthusiastic about the direction that we're heading." "We hope ? is our lucky number," he said.

Microsoft has been up against strong competition from browser giant Google's Android, as both newcomers fight for a share of a market dominated by the Blackberry and Apple's iPhone.

"The primary goal of Windows Mobile ? is clearly to address Microsoft's shortcomings in the consumer mobile market," said Ezeiko Gelvin, analyst at research firm Forrester.

Google has made a splash in the mobile phone industry with its Android operating system, launched in 2007, and phone makers have announced that they would release several new smartphones with the platform this year.

Smartphones fitted with Microsoft's operating system had 7.9 percent market share in the third quarter of last year, a drop from 11.1 percent in the same period in 2008, according to research group Gartner.

In the meantime in their place BlackBerry-maker Research in Motion saw its market share increase to 20.6 percent and Apple's iPhone rose to 17.1 percent, according to Gartner.

In its upgrade, Microsoft completely changed the platform's interface and installed the capabilities of its Xune MP3 player, which has only been available in the United States.

The system includes an "hubs" that group services by theme, such as a "people" idea that includes e-mail, text messages and updates from social network activities, or an Xbox Live icon for online games.

Microsoft promised touch-screen phones will be rolled out later this year in partnership with several device makers including Qualcomm, Samsung and LG, as well as operators from AT&T to T-Mobile and Vodafone, the company said. AFP

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Eight tips to save on fuel

By Gerchi Santos
Contributor

SUMMERS AROUND the corner, and that means traveling on holiday to your favorite destinations. For the average Filipino family, that means driving to those favorite destinations. There are some tips to help you maximize your driving pleasure, savings and efficiency.

1 Step on the gas pedal evenly. Most people think that short shifting (i.e. shifting below 2000 RPM) is the best, most fuel-efficient means of driving. This is called lugging. Lugging puts undue stress on the engine since it is being called to haul the vehicle's weight with inadequate engine revs, thus shifting to the next higher gear, increasing load or stress on the engine further. Not only is this notion of economical fuel saving false, but also harmful to your engine in the long run. This is also harmful to the environment since unnecessarily low revving engines cause poor combustion, more carbon monoxides and excessive carbon build-up in your engines, negating even more power and efficiency.

To do this properly, imagine your gas pedal's range of motion in percentage. All the way down is 100 percent, and at its depressed position being zero percent. The key is not going beyond 50 percent of the travel unless you have to, and shifting at or near the engine's maximum torque output. In a typical gasoline engine car, that would be anywhere between 2000 RPM to 3000 RPM. May ari, the gas pedal between 20 percent (depression of its full range of motion, are between these two points, shift accordingly and try to reach your target cruising speed as soon as possible. Your engine will be happy in the long run. At about 80-90 kmh, almost any vehicle will only require about 20 horsepower to cruise at this speed. Getting there takes more fuel and effort from the engine. Step on the gas pedal positively, accelerate quickly, and keep a steady speed.

2 Cruise at a steady speed. Once your car's fuel sour targets cruising speed, stay there, don't slow up or speed down unnecessarily. You are consuming the least amount of fuel when you're cruising since your engine has to overcome the vehicle's weight and has its own inertia. Maintain that speed. Keep a safe distance ahead so you can coast easily and carefully inch that if the road clears up again, you'll require minimal effort to get back up to your target speed. And your driving will be even more stress free.

3 Pump up those tires. Tires operate within a specified range of temperature and pressure. Most modern cars and SUV's are in the 30-35psi (pounds per square inch) range. The bigger the tire, the thinner the tire's sidewalls and so low-profile, high-performance tires and the heavier the car, the more air you need to pump into the tires. Gone are the days when people would simply put 26-28psi. Nowadays, you need the air volume inside the tire to support the vehicle properly and get the tires to operate properly, giving accurate feedback, ample grip and stability. I generally start out at 33psi all-around on cold tires regardless of what kind of car I'm driving, then adjust 1-2psi accordingly. It's on the fleet side, but is a decent starting point.

Poorly inflated tires can account for as much as a 10 percent increase in fuel consumption. Be careful to read the maximum tire pressure rating that your tires are designed to handle as overly inflated tires can cause ill-handling orbicles, create a loss in control and tire deterioration. (The rubber layers may separate/degrade/worse, rim-plane tire failure whereas the tires explode). Correctly inflated tires can cause ill-handling orbicles, create a loss in control and tire deterioration. (The rubber layers may separate/degrade/worse, rim-plane tire failure whereas the tires explode). Correctly and carefully inch that if the road clears up again, you'll require minimal effort to get back up to your target speed. And your driving will be even more stress free.

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4 Throw the garbage out. Your car is a means of transportation, not a locker room, storage bin or trash can. Every unnecessary non-essential should be removed from it. The less there is inside your car, the lighter it will be, and in performance, the less Cubic (Displacement) light is right, a lighter car will always be more fuel efficient, more accelerative, brake better, turn better and feel more responsive. Your car will also be quieter since there's less junk flying inside your car. Lighten your car in the 5-segment class such as the Honda Jazz / City, Toyota Yaris / Vios and Mazda 2 category of cars will benefit from this more than heavyweights such as full-size SUV's since the less in essentially unloaded weight requires a bigger overall percentage in the overall weight loss of your vehicle.

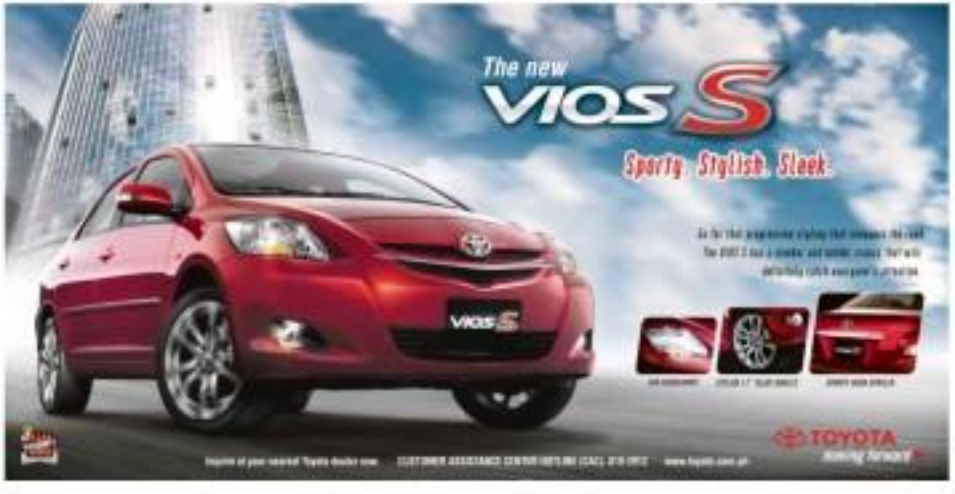
5 Keep your engine happy. Follow your engine's prescribed preventive maintenance schedule as Pitstop and on the hood of your car affixed. Most modern cars are designed to run with energy-saving 5W-30 fully-synthetic engine oil. Pay close attention to the viscosity of the oil. The thicker the oil, the more drag and friction it will cause on your engine's moving parts. That's wasted power. This oils allow the engine to warm up quickly, provide all the lubrication and heat transferring abilities your engine will need under normal driving conditions and provides the best amount of friction and drag for your engine's rotating internals. Clean your air filter regularly too, because the engine is essentially an air pump that needs fresh, clean air flowing into and out of it as quickly as possible. Dirty, clogged air filters restrict fresh air, making the engine produce less power. You'll be stepping on your gas pedal deeper, longer and more often just to get the acceleration you had comfortable with, wasting fuel in the process.

6 Monitor and service your engine's cooling system. Most drivers very rarely check their vehicle's cooling systems. And with good reason as most modern cars have sophisticated, self-regulating cooling systems which keep the engine at its optimal temperature range, around 90 degrees Celsius, plus or minus 5 degrees. However, since we glean more going beyond this range for prolonged periods of time, your engine will start becoming inefficient as the added heat transfers onto the fuel-cooling into the engine. This is further exacerbated by modern engines that, since it detects an engine heating up beyond its ideal range, throws in more gasoline into the engine in an effort to cool down the engine itself precisely by using the fuel as a means of heat transfer, then dumping the fuel out of your engine via exhaust gasses. This is a great way to save your engine, but not very eco-friendly. Hence, make sure your cooling system is filled with distilled water mixed with the right mix of coolant (usually 60 percent water and 40 percent coolant), your radiator's fins are straight and clean of debris, grime, mud, dirt and other obstructions, your radiator cap is tight and not leaking, and your fans working properly.

7 Pick the fuel that suits your engine well. This is purely empirical, but all engines are made the same. Find the best type of fuel that runs best with your car. Certain fuels will tend to give certain engines more power but less economy. Others tend to give a good balance of power and economy, while others consistently yield a dog of a car, it just won't run the way you want it. The same can be said for engine oils and to a lesser extent, spark plugs especially for riding dirt bikes or type ignition systems.

8 Plan your trips well. Even the best fuel plans and preparations for fuel savings will be for naught if you find yourself idling in a traffic jam. Research your destinations, try to learn as many possible alternate routes, ask around for the best times to travel, otherwise you'll encounter the same amount of traffic in the destinations you are going to. Bring a map as well so you can make course adjustments on the fly.

Remember, fuel efficiency is different from plain and simple fuel economy. The most consistent efficiency which is a balance of power, consumption and keeping the engine happy in the long run. If you drive a 1.4 liter VW powered 7-seater SUV, there's no way it will match a 1.3 liter inline-4 cylinder econo car, but you can maximize the effort of the fuel it consumes by following these tips.



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Toyota hopes to end gas pedal woes with a shim

Berrina offers diesel engine care

BMW's entry-luxury baby SAV

FIRST, THERE WAS THE X5. Then came the X3, followed by the baby X6 in 2008. Just when everyone thought that BMW would come up with an even bigger X7 as their next Sports Activity Vehicle (SAV), the great Teutonic estate rid 2009 hit the world and gave the "small is beautiful" mantra of decades past new cred.

Against this backdrop, enter the BMW X1 sDrive 2.0 i, the smallest BMW SUV to hit the Philippine compact crossover in the world, the newest kid on the block was launched in Makati last month with BMW importer Asian Carmakers Corp. proudly announcing that the Philippines is the first Southeast Asian market to offer it. This shows the importance of the Philippine market, ACC president Bobby Besikof said at the launch.

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

The X1's 2.0 litre, 177 hp common rail direct injection turbo diesel engine

THE COCKPIT resembles that of the BMW 3 Series

BMW's new baby Sports Activity Vehicle, the X1

Primarily designed

That sounds nice, but the Munich-based carmaker's decision not to introduce the X1 in North America until 2011 may suggest another conclusion: the X1 was primarily designed for the European and Asian markets, where small vehicles sell well, and is being positioned as the entry-luxury SAV that it was at least first on those two continents. With a price tag of P1,895,000, entry-luxury level the X1 certainly is, if not luxury-entry level. In fact, the X1 is just as pricey as the BMW X3 and rival Q5.

That said, BMW can rightfully proclaim the X1 as the world's first premium compact crossover/SAV because it is smaller, shorter in overall height (only 60.6 inches) and also leaves 27.6 inches ground clearance) than the Mercedes-Benz GLK 280, Lexus RX 350, Audi Q5, Land Rover Freelander 2 and Volvo XC60. What's more, the X1 looks more curbie than its competitors and in some cases provides a more car-like ride quality.

Common rail

Another advantage that the X1 flaunts over the gasoline-fed competition is its common rail direct injection diesel powerplant. Sure, the Land Rover Freelander2 and Volvo XC60 65 so have common rail diesel variants, but their engines have bigger displacements....2.2 litre in the Freelander2 and 2.4 liter 5 cylinder in the XC60 D5—and they are bigger and heavier, meaning they probably consume more fuel than the small, 2-litre X1. The X1 guzzles 10.5 kilometers per liter, upstrain from zero to 100 kph in 8.6 seconds and has a top speed of 200 kph.

If you're a premium car buyer scrutinizing prices, the X1 2.0 i is much more expensive than the Volvo XC60 D5. But hey that's the price you pay for brandishing the BMW badge with its legendary heritage of sports car like handling, dynamic performance and awesome agility. Built on the BMW 3 Series chassis, the X1 is powered by a turbo (sorry 2.0 liter common rail diesel engine with direct injection and turbocharger with variable intake geometry producing 177 hp/4,000 rpm and 350 Nm /1,750-rpm max torque.

Grip

The 6-speed automatic transmission with Steptronic, hydraulic steering and xDrive, BMW's standard AWD system, plus a firmly tuned suspension guarantee grip whatever the road surface and weather conditions. The X1 is not built or packaged for hard core off road adventuring as it is not equipped with low range gearing and the requisite approach and departure angles and all that stuff. But just one look at this beautiful baby and you'll never want to take it off road where it can get scratched, dented and/or dirty.

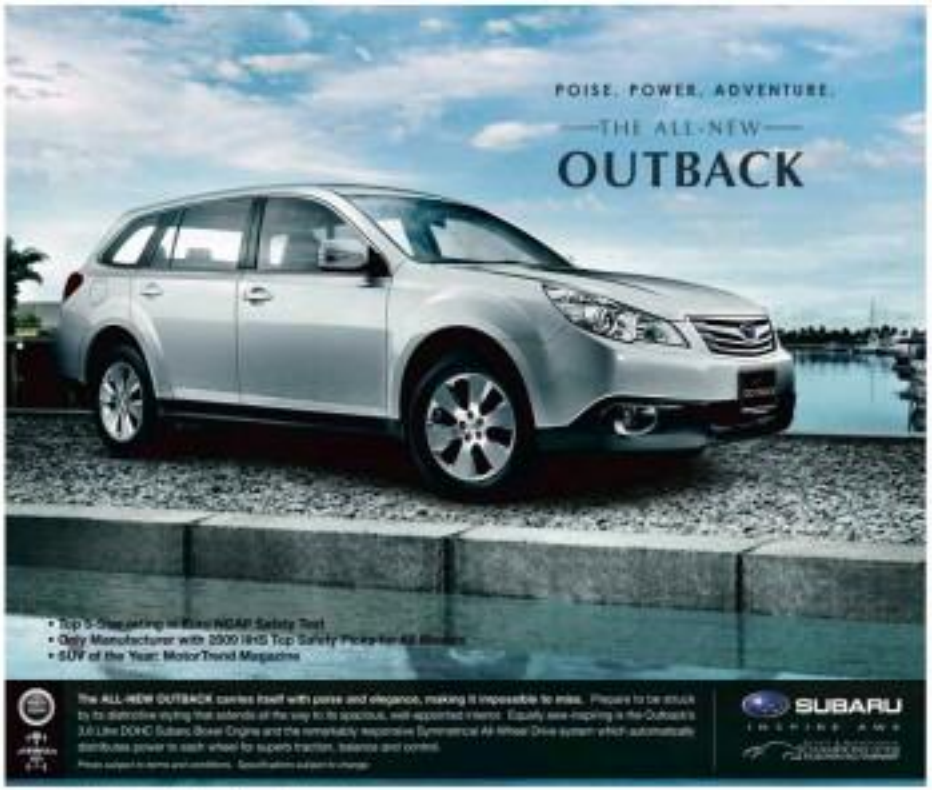
Which brings up the question in the minds of BMW fans: Won't the X1 gnaw market share from the X3, which is also a compact premium SAV and with a diesel variant as that? Well, yes and no. The X1 and X3 are classified by priced but have different market niches. The X1 looks more like an elegant station wagon or what they call an estate car in the UK, using seats direct by from the 3 Series while the X3 appears more utilitarian, more SUV. And while the X3's exterior looks bigger, the X1's interior has more headroom and more shoulder room front and rear than the current X3 plus more storage space and cupholders. BMW's sunniness and drive, fortunately, is on par from the X3.

Safety

The X1's safety features include six airbags, ABS with Cornering Brake Control, Dynamic Stability Control, Dynamic Traction Control, heated disc brakes on all 17-inch wheels, runflat indicator, park distance control front and rear, electronic engine immobilizer, intermittent wipers. The audio system has a Radio BMW Professional, CD changer, USB interface, Bluetooth phone preparation and AUX-in connection in the center console.

Summing up, the X1 is a stylishly packaged, sporty premium baby SAV. It is a joy to behold and a pleasure to drive. It is in your reasons for being.

TODAY'S BUMPER STICKER: Rebuilders don't create many jobs.



MOTORING

Is it the year of China's metal tigers?

CKMS Side Chana Benni are getting more acceptance.

Chinese struggle to bridge automotive 'divide'

By Tonio R. Salazar

CHINESE HISTORY AND culture is rich in invention and innovation. Many of the things we often take for granted today traces its origins, or at least its first recorded uses, in ancient China. Think of gunpowder, the compass, paper making and printing, and you have to thank your Chinese friend for his or her forefather's ingenuousness for it.

But when it comes to making automobiles, well, conventional wisdom dictates that you should think somewhat else for it. Cards like Isuzu, Cessnons, and maybe even the Japanese, for the feisty ride you have in your garage right now.

As inventions with Western origins, automobiles are arguably a state-made beast the Chinese are generally still struggling to "tame." And to spice things up, the rest of the world is watching closely how China manages its own automotive industry, what with concerns about global climate change and safety playing into the scenario.

The automotive "divide" between China-made cars and the rest of the developed world runs across local shores, as well. It is not uncommon for Filipinos in rapid Chinese-made cars like a child derailing an impending carsine diet. But then, we are also seeing big companies collecting fleets of China-made cars to make the transhipment easier for transactions.

So what is this "divide" both users left and more "intrigued" about during auto shows. Last April, in particular, during the Manila International Auto Show, China-made cars were displayed prominently alongside Western and Japanese and Korean cars. A number of guests take an inner love and complained of the "unfair spotlight" bestowed upon the Chinese cars—an observation organizer Joseph Ang of Worldlink Services International put to rest when he assured the public that the manufacturers on display had passed certain safety requirements the Chinese government.

Mike Ou, one of Wise Cars organizers, added that other Chinese manufacturers are a way to bridge this divide by commissioning established, prestigious automotive companies from the United States or Europe (such as MG) to help it polish it and to their manufacturing processes.

Ride them or deride them, China-made cars, and their previous across the globe, are inevitable as the world's most populous nation relationship to China at the next superpower.

But there will be major bumps along the way, that's for sure. Raymond B. Tribelhis, vice president for marketing and sales of Toyota Motors Philippines Inc. (which distributes the Chery brand in the country) laments that the 30-percent import duty levied on Chinese-made cars and parts is proving to be the biggest obstacle in doing business in the country. In comparison, Abu Dhabi (Asian New Trade Area) manufacturers are levied only 5 to 5 percent taxes.

Bank discrimination

"Another obstacle is the lack of support from the auto financing segment," Tribelhis disclosed. "Most China brands are frowned upon by the big banks. Most of our vehicle financing comes from medium sized banks or boutique car financing we do ourselves. There have been several cases where our customers have been approved for a loan/lease but the bank managers would swap the customers to choose another brand. The reason the banks give to explain this situation is that they need more time to examine the strength of the brand. This is [happening not only] to Chery but to China auto brands in general."

Tribelhis says such bank discrimination is a major result of the low 14-percent take conversion of the company's walk-in-to-sale/lease ratio.

Usual newbie challenges

Jesus Miguel A. Montano, marketing manager of Mitsubishi Motors Philippines Corp. (MMPC), Philippines said that as a new player in the local market, the company is faced with the usual challenges of being a newbie.

"We do not have the brand image and awareness of other known brands, so a customer would usually research first about Fuso before deciding to purchase our products. We help these realize how good our products are by letting them test drive our vehicles. This way they personally experience the vehicle and erase the negative misperceptions. P&P also contributes a lot in advertising and promotion to let ourselves known to the Filipinos," said Montano.

John Hinbody, assistant vice president for sales and marketing of Mitsubishi Corp.-Ubiquitous of Great Wall Motors Co Ltd., said that "Chinese have created their government because all China brands are the same, and are therefore inferior. He countered that Great Wall Motors CDS products already sleek advanced features

(CONTINUED ON B-4)

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4D Love of a Vanity PL8

By Alvin Uy
Contributor

IN HONG KONG, LUXURY CARS ARE a common sight. It has the highest per-capita of Rolls Royces on the planet, although it sounds ironic for a city that has a 300 percent duty on imported luxury cars. They are also a problem, mainly superstitious bunch of motorists. Just a number of these luxury car owners pay a ransom to secure those choice cars with very expensive vanity plates.

Since 2006, Hong Kong transportation officials started to auction vanity plates in an effort to raise funds for charity. It starts with a minimum bid of about HK $600 and the last goes up if other motorists want that same vanity plate to mean desirable. Some of these plates fetch amounts of over tens of thousands of dollars. Most common numbers involve numbers ending in 4 or 8, considered to be most desirable and auspicious. One of the most common combination are the numbers "168" which sounds like the phrase "sure road to prosperity" when pronounced in some local Chinese dialects. This is where the popular 168 Mall name came from. And if not all of us Filipinos can speak our Chinese and then believe by having a lucky name it will bring them good sales.

Before the Hong Kong government started auctioning vanity plates, there were two very spectacular bids for a "lucky" license plate in recent memory. The most expensive one was won by Albert Yeung for HK $1.26million with plate number 9, because the number 9 sounds like "everlasting" when pronounced in the Cantonese dialect. The second lucky plate went for HK $7.11million in February 2008 to an unidentified bidder who must have bid for plate number 12 which sounds like "certainly easy."

The chief executive of Hong Kong's Monetary Authority has a license plate bearing "8888," a figure that sounds for Hong Kong's dollar pay of HK$7.8 is to US$1. Popular Hong Kong Feng Shui expert Charles Mak's Porsche has a vanity plate number "168."

Are we paying too much for a "lucky" plate?

plate with the phrase "FUNG SHUI."

Generally, homeowners use a mix of the superstitious Chinese to determine which numbers are lucky and which ones are not. Here is a list of the "lucky" numbers:

Two (2)...Since there is a Chinese saying "good things come in pairs," the number 2 is considered a good number in Chinese culture. The popular brand Double Happiness is a common reference to this belief.

Three (3)...The number 3 sounds similar to the Chinese character for "birth" and since events like childbirth or the birth of a new business are considered auspicious, number 3 is considered lucky.

Five (5)...There are 5 elements in Chinese philosophy—wood, wood, fire, earth and metal. This number is bravely associated with the fragrance of China so it is considered as auspicious.

Seven (7)...Just like the Western world, the number 7 is somewhat regarded as lucky too. In Mandarin it sounds like a character pronounced as "chi" which means "to arise." However, the 7th month is considered by the Chinese as the "ghost or unlucky" month and so in some regions in China it is also considered to be a "neutral" numbers.

Eight (8)—This is one of the most favored numbers and it sounds similar to "prosper" or "wealth" in most Chinese dialects. The character of double happiness also resembles the strokic number 8. In the Beijing Olympics, the opening ceremony of the Summer Games began on August 8, 2008 at 8 minutes and 8 seconds past 8 p.m. of the local time. A Hangzhou businessman was reportedly offering his license plate number A88888 for RMB 1.1million (approx. US$155,000).

Nine (9)...The number 9 is a homonym of "everlasting" so it is suggestively used in weddings and other important ceremonies.

The unlucky ones

Four (4)—This number is considered very unlucky but only in Chinese culture. Just in Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese cultures as well. This number is a homonym for the word "death" in pathology it is a term known as tetraphobia (fear of number 4).

Six (6)—While the number 6 is pronounced as Mandarin as "liu" one sounds like a character meaning "final" or "liquid" and is supposed to be good for business. But in Cantonese and Fujian dialect it sounds similar to "death" or "fail" so it is generally considered unlucky.

It is predominantly Chinese and Roman Catholic owners like me, we seldom get influenced by these numbers although local vanity plates are also sought after by some motorists. Regardless whether one believes in these numbers or not, the most important numbers every motorist should have something one for are the numbers of our speedometer.

Is it the year of China's metal tigers?

From page B1-1

gear designs and technologies, specifications and features, and are comparable to other leading brands. Its vehicles, he stressed, are more than ill-intentions.

Jessica Paola Tolosa, brand manager of Foton Motors Inc. (which sells the China brand in the country), admits that the local auto market is "biased towards Japanese, American and European brands.

"Four months after almost two years in the Philippines, our brand is getting to be more accepted," she observed.

Safety concerns

Safety, or the lack of it, has been an issue for consumers. Chinese-made car brands, even after the manufacturers and distributors addressing the issue?

"Our safety rating is only as good as what the various New Car Assessment Programs (NCAP) ratings are given. Our entry-car, like the QQ and QQ6 has as well as any small car in its accident-with a 4-star vehicle. However, if you take a close look at our cars, our average safety equipment (silhouettes) is higher than other Japanese or Japanese/ orientation also more aggressive. For example, our MPV the V5 has dual airbags, active headrests, pretensioner seatbelts, and safety cage all for the humble price of P680,000," said Tolosa.

"Versus European or American cars, we may be at a disadvantage due to addition of safety equipment like side airbags, active suspension and steering. But between the Indian brands like Tata and Maruti or our Malaysian friends, Proton vehicles have more safety features," he added.

Mehalay said that Automotive Corp's cars now offer reinforced body cages, crumple zones, side impact beams, seatbelts, antilock brake systems and otherwise is brake distribution. Inside by-side seatbelt, as well as dual airbags, anti-theft systems, backup sensors, front and rear foglamps, four-wheel disc brakes, and antilock brake light. All of these features have been tested in the company's facilities and in China's longest road test area."

Northern said that Foton Motors (international has invested heavily on research and development, and has set up research and development offices in Japan, Germany, and Taiwan, which are continuously utilized to improve the performance, quality and safety of its vehicles.

He cited the M999 van, which already has 1900 airbags sold since last January. He added that it were has an ABS+EBD brake system from Bosch and an ESC (Electronic Stability Control) which improves the handling and enhances vehicle safety.

He added that Foton had conventional ES (seats) fitted to ensure that the frontal, side, and rear collision safety performances comply with Europe 70 standards.

Tolosa said Chinese and Asian Automobile Works (a subsidiary of China 168) (Group Corp. works its manufacturing with 30 years of experience) have had a long history as joint venture partners with well-known Japanese, American and European car and truck manufacturers such as Isuzu, Iveco, Ford, and Audi. As such, the start to safety standards are as par with the models of the same range or of other global automotive companies.

Warranty, if the market wants it

Offering long-term warranties may be a way to encourage the public to give Chinese-made cars a try.

Tolosa said that Foton Motors Inc. can offer 3 to 10-year warranties on its cars should the market standard require such. "Currently it is not a common practice. It is hard for us to predict what will happen on the auto industry in the next few years. If it would require for the manufacturers to extend the warranty of their cars, the company needs to adapt and come up with the same warranty."

Statement currently offers a three-year or 100,000-kilometer check, according to Mehalay is still very much the standard among car brands in the country.

"I think it would be advantageous for anybody to extend their warranty period to five or 10 years, which we think will turn to lose competitive and tend on the message that we are ready for what we do our products. We are discussing this with Great Wall. As of now, however, it's still on the study," said Mehalay.

Tolosa also said that Foton is a commercial vehicle brand only products and mainly for business or utility.

"We offer 3 years/ 150,000km warranty for our passenger vehicles and 1 year/ 60,000km for our trucks. This is because it is assumed that our vehicles are driven 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in service the business of their owners. Also, they are usually driven by hired/professional drivers who take less care of their car before/ well being. Given the above scenario, we cannot offer the 3 years (or above) warranty."

Tolosa said that the Chery brand offers a 3-year warranty or 100,000-kilometer, while the Geely brand offers a 3-year warranty provided by other car makers. It is not reputation of such dance for the brand. Isn't believe the Filipino mentality to trade for Chinese-made cars. There is probably the most accepted Chinese brand in the Philippine market owing to its rapid expansion in key cities. The Chery QQ was quickly accepted initially due to its price and affordability. Later on, people realized the practicality of having a car that had the frugality (of most) of a motorcycle and inexpensive parts and maintenance. It was only later than people realized the customer care."

Chinese automakers view recalls as opportunity

By Tessa R. Salazar

THE RECENT TOYOTA CHIEF EXECUTIVE WORLD, especially in the United States, is that American brands, among others, are picking up sales as Japanese auto giants Toyota and Honda continue to be hounded by recalls.

In the Philippines, Toyota and Honda enjoyed a successful two weeks ago, reassuring the motoring public that their cars were not affected by safety issues that triggered the recall.

Observing these developments with a keen eye is emerging world power China, its own automotive industry has been producing automobiles on a global scale. What are the Chinese carmakers' take on the problems plaguing the ailing top giant?

"I see it as an opportunity for us and for other players, especially Chinese carmakers. What happened to the other leading brands serves as an eye opener for the Philippine market. That proved that even the giants of the automotive world can have problems with their vehicles, which, unfortunately, the buying public is often never told about. I hope that it will make everyone realize that there are other brands that are available to prove that no problem," quipped John Mehalay, assistant vice president for sales and marketing of Automotive Corp (sole distributor of Great Wall Motor in Iloilo).

Great Wall Motor Co. Ltd is a privately-run automaker based in China. It produces subcompact, compact passenger cars, SUVs, MPVs and pickups.

Juan Miguel A. Santamo, marketing manager, National Dealer Development of Foton Motor Philippines, said that the issue is not "recall" but "service campaign."

"It is a matter because consumers are more careful in making their purchases of automotive products and manufacturers have to satisfy the once-stated expectations that consumers have. It is an opportunity because if you're able to manage the safety expectations and your competitor doesn't, you're actually able to capture market share. We are a very positive group which considers the scenario a big opportunity."

FMC market research pitch says, passenger cars, light to medium duty trucks, and research in new line of fuel-cell vehicles.

Raymund R. Tabalina, vice president, marketing and sales of Jeremy Motors Philippines (the distributor the popular Chery brand, stressed that recalls are a sign that the good (of the industry). Instead it would mean that the manufacturer is involved in "paying attention to the customer."

"When I was with another car company, I had the notion that inside two or three years, all of the bad of them who were very prone for the brand. It is a necessary evil that may affect the bottom line in the short or medium term. But like telling your mom you broke her favorite vase before she finds out, the sequence effects will be short-lived."

The Chery brand, the largest independent Chinese auto manufacturer, was introduced in China in 1997. In 2009 Chery sold about 200,000 units also globally and over a million cars worldwide since starting operations.

Dennis Paolo Tolosa, brand manager of Foton Motors Inc (which sells the China brand), pointed out that results have happened in numerous brands. "Most accidents don't even remember the moment. Right now Toyota is doing everything it can to modify the problem. We believe that after properly addressing this problem, consumers would likewise see the manufacturer in a positive light," she said.

Chery has been involved in the automotive industry since the 1950s when it produced military jeeps for the Chinese government. The military-turned-civil enterprise produced its civilian-use auto cars in 1980.

Company Name	Plans in Region	Year Established	No. of Workers	Annual Car Production	Website
Foton Motors Inc.	Plans joint ven	2007	8, 0 no company owned	600,000	www.fotonmotors.com.ph
Fortune Distributors Inc.	Iloilo	2007	4, 1 no company owned	600,000	
Mitsubishi Corporation	Great Wall, Hong Sing Hua	2008	0 dealer	600,000	www.mitsubishi.com.ph
Ford Motor Philippines	India	2008	75, 2 company owned	600,000	www.ford.com.ph
JAC Automotive Phils.	JAC	2007	1 company owned	600,000	www.jac.com.ph
Hyundai Motors Phil., Inc.	China	2007	20 dealer	600,000	www.chevroletmotor.com

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RAPIDE HONORS FRANCHISEES

Rapido Auto Service Experts, the leading car care chain of shops in the country, recently held the Rapido e-dvantage Summit at 1 Rapido. The e-Way" as a reference to top franchisees. Shown are, from left, Rapido general manager Eric P. Enriquez, Rapido managing director Rene K. Limcaoco, Rapido Pasig-Francisco Davis Jr. Co, Rapido Pasig store manager Allan Regador and store staff Rowell Domingo.

Black leather seats for 2010 Accord

HONDA'S HIGHLY ACCLAIMED premium sedan adds new dimension to its styling with the 2010 Accord. Featuring a well appointed interior design for the latest Accord, Honda Cars Philippines, Inc. offers an enhanced model that caters not what the market asks for. Committed to provide ultimate customer satisfaction by paying regular attention to customers' voice, the 3.5 liter Accord is now fitted with sleek and supple black leather seats.

The 2010 Honda Accord's interior is delicately crafted with only the finest materials to draw out an air of opulence that matches its bold and sophisticated exterior. The Accord's plush black leather seats provide comforting luxury that is also easy to maintain. Controls for audio and air conditioning system are also improved for better functionality and ease of use.

Beyond great styling, the Honda Accord also offers flawless performance that lends your mind for power without sacrificing fuel economy. The Honda Accord's high rubber features make it perfect for those in control and those keen on substance. Powered by the i-VTEC (Intelligent Variable Valve Timing and Electronic Lift Control), the 3.5 liter variant ably responds to your heart's desire with its maximum power capacity of 275 ps @ 6300 rpm. Such variant is also equipped with the latest advancement in fuel-efficient technology called, Variable Cylinder Management (VCM).

With the VCM system, optimal power output, promising fuel economy and lesser harmful emissions in actual driving situations become possible by simply closing down cylinders when not needed. VCM tailors the number of cylinders to be activated to match one's driving requirements. Such seamless activation and deactivation of cylinders from 6 to either 4 or 3 brings about the coming of its nickname, VCM 6 e 3.

MCMURRAY gets drenched after the chaotic win at the Daytona Speedway. AP

McMurray holds off Earnhardt to win Daytona 500

DAYTONA BEACH, FLORIDA—Jamie McMurray held off a hard-charging Dale Earnhardt Jr. over a wild, two-lap sprint to win NASCAR's Daytona 500 on Sunday.

The race was stopped twice and delayed for more than two hours because of a pothole at Daytona International Speed way and the setback nearly derailed the event—which ended more than six hours after the first green flag. NASCAR struggled to patch the hole, and drivers knew the pavement could tear at any time after the final restart.

It seemed they had to race until the final lap to settle (210 kilometers). There a flurry of last-ditch accidents put NASCAR's "green-white-checkered" policy—an overtime of sorts—to the test.

McMurray, using a boost from former teammate Greg Biffle, powered into the lead on the second and final green, white-checkered attempt. But Earnhardt, who contested the final sprint in 1985 places, was diving his way through the field.

He wrestled in and out of traffic, shoving his Chevrolet into three wide lines, eventually darting his way to McMurray's bumper. It was vintage Earnhardt—he's a 12-time Daytona winner sponsored NASCAR's top two series—and McMurray was terrified to see him growing in his rearview mirror.

"When I saw the 88 behind me, I thought, 'Oh no,' he had a good run and I just thought... Earnhardt and Daytona, they win all the time it just seems," McMurray said. "You never know what to expect."

But with just two laps to make up so much ground, Earnhardt ran out of time and had to settle for second as McMurray sailed to his first career Daytona 500 victory.

"I didn't know where I was, just know, 'If I really kind of got done almost wrecking down the back straightaway," Earnhardt said of his charge. "Then I looked up—there's just one car in front of me, Jamie's gonna win this damn race!"

"I was happy for him. He deserves it. They've been through a lot. It's a great team."

McMurray climbed from his car and ran to the Daytona 500 logo in the infield, dropping to his knees and pounding on the painted grass. Downcar with emotion, he sobbed in Victory Lane as he celebrated with his Earnhardt Ganassi Racing team.

It was McMurray's first race back with Chip Ganassi and Felix Sabates, who gave him his sprint cup series start in 2002. But McMurray left and spent four years at Roush Fenway Racing, only to lose that ride at the end of last season when NASCAR feared Roush-Yates Motors must infront car limit.

McMurray had to fight to get a race back with Ganassi, and it included convincing sponsor Aaa Pro Shops owner Johnny Morris to take a chance on him.

The risk was well rewarded Sunday with the biggest win of McMurray's career.

"It's unreal," McMurray sobbed. "You know, to be where I was last year and for Johnny Morris and Chip and Felix. What a way to pay them back. It's just very emotional."

Clint Bowyer finished fourth and was followed by David Reutimann, Matt Kenseth and Kasey Kahne—teammates for Michael Waltrip, who finished 10th in what's expected to be his final Daytona 500. AP

FORD Group Philippines president Richard Baker (fourth from right) awards to Willy Tee Tan, Dealer Principal/President of Ford Global City, the Dealer of the Year trophy during the recent Dealer Convention at Dusit Hotel. Ford Global also rewarded awards as Top Seller Dealer for Expedition, E150 Explorer and Escape markets, Sales Shift-Olympic champion and top ESB Seller. Also shown are, from left, FGP Parts Supply & Logistics AVP Jaggy Carillo, FGP Technical Support Operations AVP Dante dela Cruz, FGP Dealer Operations AVP Joyce Lasamana, FGP Sales and Marketing VP Sharon Tan, FSC Audit and Sections VP Christina Chua, FGP Sales AVP Shen Dong, FSC general sales manager Bobbi Barker and FGC VP Operations/GM Danny Chua.

Ford poised for a strong year with exciting lineup

By Joey Arcadio
Motoring Editor

AFTER SURVIVING A TUMULTUOUS year for global business with better-than-expected numbers, Ford Group Philippines is ready to face the challenges of the current year using overall technological feats expected to further boost the image of its vehicle lineup.

"In my 31 years with Ford, I've never been this excited about the future of this company," said FGP president Rick Baker in a recent meeting with motoring journalists.

Amid a spate of unnerving developments in the motoring scene when Toyota grapples with a serious recall dilemma and China-made cars are making their strong presence felt, Baker believes that Ford has more than one up its sleeve.

The Ford Focus is one of them.

Long in search of a sedan that will improve its ranking in market share (Ford entered 9th last year), the Focus will be launched in the second half of the year and Baker said "it will definitely change the way people look at Ford."

Baker hinted at touching off the country's own Focus Movement campaign after the US main office commissioned the services of a hundred individuals who will practically live with the cars and share their experiences via blogs, tweets and Facebook posts.

With Ford's Ecoboost technology on gas GasBo direct injection engines, expectations are high that customers will realize Ford also make cars that are fuel efficient.

Baker reeled off more gains from Ford's relentless research and development.

Basic features like the SmartTouch dual climate transmission, the MyFord Touch that makes easy vehicle personalization, the Active Park Assist for parallel parking with the touch of a button, the Blind Spot Information System with Cross Traffic Alert that aids drivers in blind spots and reversing out of parking and backable exit, bells for runs and safety still be common in all Ford vehicles.

What more, the Ford MyKey feature is forthcoming. It allows parents to limit the speed and audio volume that will eventually lead their teenage kids to drive safer, save on fuel and buckle up every time they hit the road.

More exciting Ford vehicles are set to roll off including the 2010 Ford Expedition, Explorer and E-250 Club Wagon as well as a new Ford Focus version, five Mazda, the 4-door and 5-door Mazda 2 and the 2010 Mazda 6 are all primed for Japan launch.

A month into the new year, FGP already logged impressive numbers with Ford releasing 376 units (20 per cent jump from last year) and Mazda dispensing 143 (25 per cent up).

Looking back, Baker expressed relief that 2009 ended up to be still a milestone year for FGP.

FGP closed the year with an all-time high sales of 1,071 vehicles for December since the start of Philippine operations. Combined sales of Mazda and Ford totaled 10,194 units, an increase of 5.6 percent from 2008 which marked the first time that FGP breached the 1,000-unit mark.

As the country's only red seal CBU exporter, Ford capped last year's efforts by completing the largest ever Fiesta make order via Ford Motor Industries (FMI) off 377 Philippine-made Ford Fiesta units for the use of the Indonesian National Police force.

Worldwide, the Blue Oval hatchery is gaining a lot of ground. The company is coming out of the doldrums and its Full year net income of $7.3 billion marks the company's first full year of positive net income since 2005 and a $17.5 billion improvement over 2006.

Editor Thelma Sioson San Juan Contributing Editor Lia S. Bernardo

LIFESTYLE Parenting

The milk maid

Breastfeeding is a team effort—so I called a coach/lactation consultant

By Joana Manahan Yupangco
Contributor

DURING MY PREGNANCY, I was bombarded with books and information about breastfeeding. Even my husband, who has no mammary glands, would tell me that I would have to give our baby breast milk for at least a year.

Although it never left, it seems that breastfeeding is back with a vengeance. Gone are the days when hospitals tied up with manufacturers of formula milk and gifted every new mother with a welcome basket full of milk in cans. Breastfeeding advocates are out in the open, louder and prouder.

Breastfeeding is not as natural or as instinctual as I thought it would be. There are the lucky few for whom it is easy; for the rest of us it is downright frustrating and difficult to get started. I knew that I would give up easily especially after the ordeal of childbirth, so I armed myself with a lactation consultant my gynecologist Dr. Tengbeko-Lopez recommended to me.

From all the reading I did, I discovered that breastfeeding was a mother-baby team effort. Every team needs a coach, so I called up Zeny Feliciano when I was seven months pregnant and scheduled a pre-natal massage with her so I could meet her.

Breastfeeding coach

Zeny is a breastfeeding coach and lactation consultant. The word "coach" means exactly that—she trains both mom and baby how to breastfeed, shows the different positions to feed your baby in, and more importantly, cheers you on and gives moral support.

Zeny's friendly and open demeanor made me feel comfortable that I could rely on her for support in breastfeeding. I asked her to come to the hospital just hours after my baby was born to help me get the right start to breastfeeding. She is considered to be parenting information, which she sends regularly through e-mail. Although she is very busy, she makes the time to see you.

Zeny started her career as spa consultant and had been practicing for four years in that field before she was hired to set up the first Prenatal-Lactation Clinic Spa in the Philippines at Asian Hospital called Belleza Spa. She went for further training in Prenatal and Lactation Massage, as both are specialty massages.

Prenatal massages are designed to relax the mother when the big belly is taking a toll on her body. It avoids certain pressure points that can trigger contractions. The lactation massage is done to stimulate the breasts to produce milk. More importantly, the lactation massage helps unclog milk ducts, a commonest occurrence in breastfeeding wherein clogged milk ducts can lead to slow release of milk, painful lumps, engorgement to the breasts and sometimes even a fever. Moreover, it gives mothers an hour and a half of time to herself to rest as session ends with a foot, shoulder and head massage, perfect for tested moms.

Classes

For those who can't get Zeny for a private session, she runs free breastfeeding classes with the group MoMMie (Moms, Milk and THEMILK) Cl

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SAMSUNG Ambassadors Monika Ilic, Maria, Helena Gehring, Migo Llanos and Marc Cotoloy

MARIA Manila, Johanna Lan and Bella Custino

FOLDED & Hung cousin Sam Milby

BONNIE Salvacion, Irish Gaches, Lia Uy, Chechet Jimeno and Folded and Hung's Allan Vizconde

FOLDED & Hung team mate Ronald Pineda and fashion designer Randy Ortiz

Samsung's 'I Imagine' bash—truly awesome

I HAVE ALWAYS BELIEVED IN THE power of the imagination. It is something not to be underestimated, dubbings. At the Samsung I Imagine party, the act of integrating feelings with visions that can translate into life-changing actions.

It was a visual and aural experience the moment we stepped inside the Bridgwell Tent, courtesy of Samsung. "I Imagine" installation featuring visuals from renowned fashion photographer Rumble Salvacion. Divided into the categories Talk, Play and Love, pabanggan, the visuals brought different "I imagine" statements to life with the help of some college students.

The Samsung I Imagine party was also the collaboration between digital technology and fashion, featuring hip clothing brand Folded & Hung's collection on the runway. The collage, vintage glam of the statement bag look, dubbings, and the F&H Filipino Heroes Historical Collection topped by modern day Filipino heroes.

The highlight was handsome actor Sam Milby (the endorser of the hip, trendy brand) modeling on the ramp, which received screams and wild applause especially from the women.

With the awesome success of the I Imagine bash, Samsung has proven again the power of the mind to bring about great results. After all, pabanggan, Samsung has always believed "everything begins with imagination." Amen.

MILO Esperon, Glaiggy Jerome dela Merced, Chief Communications' Peter Reyes and Camille and Marky Martinez

SAMSUNG Ambassadors Marc Cotoloy, Jessica Mendoza, Eric Tarrayo, Simon Atienza and Melissa Gehring

PBMC chair Gerardo Lanuza, Jr., his wife Constance Lanuza, Andrea Lanuza (wife of Domenico Lanuza) and PBMC board member Gerardo Domenico Antonio Lanuza

TWO BEDROOM unit at Andrea North Towers

Without batting an eyelash

Maurice Arambulo

Photos by Alex Vitas Hagues using **VRL** Photo Solutions

New Segafredo bar

With the mushrooming of coffee shops everywhere, pabanggan, the yearning for a top-level aromatic blend has increased exponentially. This once morning ritual has now become a satisfying lavish commodity.

Enter such a memorable coffee experience, an Italian lifestyle trademark, Segafredo Zanetti Espresso extends to the cravings of coffee connoisseurs and pleasure-seeking aficionados. In fact, the famous brand had already been serving the absolute ultimately to Filipinos at various prime spots in the metropolis.

Now, with 20 years of experience and over 600 locations worldwide, the ambassador of authentic Italian Espresso culture opens up another door for opportunity to savor the perfect espresso in a perfect Italian vibe moment at the heart of today's hottest magic-potion center.

Delivering the romantic and welcoming atmosphere that's truly Italian, with 20 years of experience and 600 locations worldwide, Segafredo Zanetti Espresso has gathered coffee drinking celebrities and personalities for an affection of pure Italian coffee goodness formally opening the latest Segafredo franchise at the ground floor of Net Plaza Building at the high end ward of The Fort in Taguig, nonlose to say this newest coffee boutique was an awesome hit as guests were offered one of the finest Italian coffee and finest age products, top level service and hospitality.

The highlight was Segafredo grand chief barista Ilka Stanoevski who gave us a fresh course on Italian Coffee 101.

Yes, pabanggan, the new Segafredo Zanetti Espresso that will surely satisfy every coffee lover's wish for real Italian grace and spirit as they experience the warmth and romance of truly dubbings.

Andrea North Towers

The latest tower to hit our town is the ultra modern Andrea North Towers, pabanggan, which many consider as "the best location in the heart of New Manila." Since the 1950s, most of the affluent families settled in this area and have developed a community of "yuchengs and class." Its close proximity to commercial areas such as Greenhills, Cubao and Greenhills has been its major selling point.

Philippine Realty & Holdings Corp. (PRHC), owner and developer of Andrea North, is inviting home buyers to visit this Andrea North Model Suites Gallery, a 52-story condominium inspired by PRHC's Mediterranean Condominium, one of the first gated residential condominium complexes in the country.

The units offered are from one- to four-bedroom-type, dubbings.

There will also be a Coconut Walk to be located in the middle of the complex.

But the crowning jewel of the building is on the roof, masterfully designed by architect Roger Villarosa, which has a five-story, glass-paneled function room, lanai and open garden landscaped by National Artist F.F. Salcedo.

"PRHC is a testament of our confidence in the Philippine economy and our commitment to the Filipino home buyer," says PRHC chair Gerardo Lanuza Jr.

After all, PRHC is known for developing the Philippine Stock Exchange Center or Tektite Towers and Alexander Condominium in Ortigas Center, no less.

Projected turnover will be in mid 2010. For inquiries, pabanggan, check out http://philrealty.com.

Opera Ball 2010

The Johann Strauss Society of the Philippines, in cooperation with Philippine Tatler, will present 12 debutantes at the grand Opera Ball 2010, which will definitely be the happening of the week, dubbings. The event is set Feb. 20, 6:00 p.m., at NBC Tent in Bonifacio.

JSSP president and overall chair of this year's Opera Ball is Olga Wardell while the chairpersons are Grand: Agnes T. Fadullon and Cristina Bolton.

COFFEE master with espresso lover, Segafredo Zanetti Espresso Bar operations manager Maries Chua and actor Martin Reymundo

MATINEE idol Enchong Dee

COMMERCIAL model Joseph Marco

TOP FASHION model Lolo Jimson

ACTOR Zanjoe Marudo

CHILDREN'S party planner Angelenia Calero and lawyer Ace Ratuptot

MILA Mon, club Agnes Hollenbeck, club Fatima Ledesma, president Olga Severina Martel, Betty Chua and chair Chitadra Bolton. Standing: Helmut Goldberger, Lilibeth Campos, Ed Yap, Chit Soliva and Gerry Contreras

BRILLIANT minds behind Philippine Realty & Holding Corp. President Amador Basani, vice chair Juan Antonio Lanuza, chair Gerardo Lanuza Jr., treasurer/secretary Jose Ma. Francisco, talented architect Roger Villarosa, and PRHC vice president Jose Sandejas Jr.

ANDREA North Towers' one-bedroom unit

Tips on ensuring healthy pets

THE BOW & WOW TIMES, a FREE! infotainment material for pet owners, available at Bow & Wow, the material per food and accessories store at 1/F, Shangri-La Plaza Mall, Shaw Boulevard, Mandaluyong City offers tips on how to improve the quality of a pet's life with good nutrition as cornerstone; how to ensure that kids are safe with the pet; and how to handle pets in a public setting.

Among the topics are "Cat Health," "Daily Fiber Dietary to Cats" and "Probiotics, What Are They? On this Dogs Need Them!"

"Basic First Aid at Home: Preparing a First Aid Kit" offers a checklist of things to keep nearby in case a pet gets injured or requires emergency aid. Other handy dog care articles are "What to Expect When Your Dog is Vaccinated" and "Urban Dog Hospitals," for individuals who love bringing along their pets to high-traffic public areas.

What about household pets who suddenly bite or cause injury to kids? The article on "Disciplining Children: Can it handle Dogs?" will be helpful to readers. Meanwhile, the "Kids and Pets" article shows how to give a child a realistic and achievable task for to ensure that he or she succeeds in caring for a pet.

The news digest also has an adoption page, complete with pet descriptions and photos of dogs and cats in search of homes. Other regular sections include "Pet Tales," with articles on certain breeds of dogs and cats, and "Pet Stars," featuring pictures of pets looking their pampered best, as observed by their owners.

Bow & Wow also has a new branch on the lower ground floor, Greenhills 5, Ayala Center, Makati City.

Tiger-inspired toys to welcome Lunar New Year

TIGERS ARE SAID TO BE courageous, noble and passionate, but they can be a lot of fun, too. As adults celebrate the Year of the Tiger, kids can welcome the Lunar New Year with cute and cuddly tiger-inspired stuff from SM.

There are adorable stuffed toys that can be morphed into bags, key chains and accessories inspired by the stripe regal of the year. Check out these tiger designs at the Children's Accessories Department of all SM stores.

Ortigas Foundation holds cultural . . .

From page C2

Still Rockin', Still Rollin', a salute to the Filipinos' enduring beloved spirit and love of life.

All Filipinos are invited to attend the homecoming. Dinner tickets are available at P800/person. For more information, contact Tess Abellon at 749 18 18, 0905 9048001; maemabellyahoo.com.

Water media painting tilt

Pinto Art Museum, Barangka Dr., Pinto. The first on-the-spot water media painting competition to celebrate the Subic Centennial, will be held Feb. 20, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m., at the ecological sanctuary at 508 Pinoso Rd., San Jacinto, Pinto, San Fernando, Pampanga City. This is sponsored by Bagets Separately Society and Corolliers Ilimas Agency.

Participants must register at the main house on the day of the contest so they can choose a spot where they can comfortably settle for the day in the forested area and garden. Bring your own materials (paints, paper, brushes, easel, rags, water container).

The competition is open to all Filipinos and foreign residents/visitors alike, age 12 (by Feb. 20) and above. Participants can work on as many pieces as they can but can only submit one entry. There is no registration fee.

For details, call or text 0918-8933943 or e-mail kalinofoundation@gmail.com.

Ateneo 'sarsawela'

This February, two blossoms on the cedro in sa in the Ateneo de Manila University's production of "Walong Sugat," a sarsuwela by Severino Reyes and Hajji Amin Tuhulan.

The production is directed by Ricardo Abad, under the musical direction of Jonathan Tolentino. Junjun Villaseñor handles lights design while Dexter Bandoc does the graphs. Set and costumes are by National Artist Salvador Bernal. Part of the proceeds from ticket sales will go to the Ateneo de Manila University's program.

60064 SO, select seats to save money for 100 scholarships this year, and its agenda for Hope.

The show runs Feb. 24-27 at Rizal Lor Ateneo Theatre. Ateneo de Manila University. For tickets, call to Sofia at 8921-2580/000.

Thomasian writers workshop

The office of the Writer-in- Residence of the University of Santo Tomas will hold the first Thomasian Writers Workshop, which will be held this summer at the University of Santo Tomas campus in Manila.

This first of a series of annual workshops catering exclusively to Thomasians is open to writer-students, alumni, faculty members or non-teaching staffers who have not been awarded fellowships to any national writing workshop.

The workshop will be held May 10-15 at St. Raymund's Building in UST and the last two days of the workshop will be tentatively held on a resort in Tagaytay.

The six-day workshop will focus on poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction both in English and Filipino. To conduct the workshop are major figures in the local literary scene, such as UST Writer-in-Residence Ophelia A. Dimalanta and Dr. Cecilio F. Bustillos. They will be assisted by other Thomasianed writers for the Palanca, Carlos Palanca Lung Ho Memorial Awards, Gawad Ustetika, Gawad Pamana ng Lahi Hall of Fame, Manila Critics Circle and Alagad ng Sining awards.

Some 20 fellowships will be available for the workshop. Applications for the workshop are accepted until March 15. Applicants should submit three printed copies (one short bond paper) and a CD or diskette containing soft copies in MS Word format of their manuscript or issue five poems or two fictions or nonfiction pieces in English or Filipino.

They should also submit their résumé, 2x2 ID photo and certification of authenticity duly signed by any official from their college or faculty or any officer from the institution or company they are presently employed in.

The successful fellows for the workshop will be announced March 31. Interested parties may call 406 1611 loc. 8281 (Tuesday-Saturdays), e-mail astrocruz@gmail.com for more details. Manuscripts, however, should be mailed or hand-delivered to Dr. Ophelia A. Dimalanta, UST Writer-in-Residence, 6/F, St. Raymund's Bldg., UST.

Holy Land pilgrimage

A pilgrimage to the Holy Land in Israel, Jordan and Egypt has been set April 13-26. The tour begins with a visit to Madaba, Jordan, at the monastery of St. George which hosts the unique mosaic map of Egypt, Jordan and the Holy Land. The Holy Land tour begins at Yardenit, or commonly known as the river Jordan, where Jesus Christ was baptized, to Nazareth where Christ grew and to Cana, the site of the first miracle of Christ. The tour proceeds to Tiberias (Sea of Galilee), Capernaum and Tabgha. Mt. Tabor (where Christ was transfigured).

Other highlights include Jerusalem, Mount Olives, Via Dolorosa, Garden of Gethsemane, Church of the Upper Room, Wailing Wall, Via Dolorosa, Holy Sepulchre, Bethlehem, Church of Nativity, Ein Karem (St. John Baptist Church) and Church of the Visitation, among others. Egypt tour includes Mount Sinai, Monastery of St. Catherine, Cairo, Egyptian Museum, Pyramids and Sphinx. Pakyaw Tactor y and Mar Rivera. Call 8154838 and 8150025 or e-mail mirasol@yahoo.com.

The milk maid

From page C1

Manila, a group of mothers who advocate breastfeeding who never assumed traditional branches to conduct classes. In June last year, Zony started her breastfeeding classes in the Montgomo office in Shaw Boulevard where she teaches expectant parents the basics of breastfeeding.

Zony also works closely with several OB-Gynecologists and pediatricians and keeps them updated on the mothers' and baby's progress.

The most rewarding part of Zony's job is to see the baby grow and thrive properly on the breast milk, and to be able to give the mother the comfort and assurance she can provide directly for her child.

"I can truly say that Zony's formula trainings are fantastic, but more importantly, it's her constant support and encouragement that keeps mothers like me, who want to give their babies breast milk, going."

Jerry C. Mirasol, breastfeeding coach. Lactation counselor therapist can be reached through our site http://breastfeeding.multiply.com; mobile no. 0919-702 0613/0908-733 8377.

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How to encourage picky kids to eat healthy

SOME MOMS ARE HAVING A hard time balancing daily meals for their kids because some are really hard to feed while others are picky eaters.

A new research study sponsored by Abbot Nutrition in the US shows more than half of children ages one to six are considered "hard to feed" by their mothers. An analysis of 173 children, ages seven to nine, revealed that at age nine, nearly half (49 percent) were classified as "hard to feed."

A study on child nutritionals done by TNS Philippines in June 2009 revealed 67 percent of Filipino kids are picky eaters.

Here are some healthy tips on how to encourage picky eaters to eat in a healthy way recommended by Geraldine Georgeos, award-renowned dietician, who held a lecture on proper nutrition in Manila recently.

- Introduce new food one at a time so kids won't get confused on the taste of a certain food.
- Serve small portions. Don't force your child to eat even if he's already full.
- Introduce unfamiliar food with familiar food for greater variety.
- Cook food in a different way.

According to Georgeos, childhood is the time to instill good eating and exercise habits. It becomes much harder to make lifestyle changes in adulthood.

She said parents play a major role in promoting a healthy lifestyle among kids by serving as role models.

"Overarching issue kids to eat the right food, it is best to introduce to them the basic food groups: grains, vegetables, milk, fruits, and the meat and lean group," said Georgeos.

In reading them the benefits of these food groups and the vitamins and minerals they provide, kids can become familiar with them.

The makers of Pediasure, a nutritional milk supplement for children one to 10 years old, understand kids' daily meals are important, and that parents must be assured their kids get all the nutrients and vitamins that can help them grow taller and stronger.

Pediasure has the highest calorie density that provides more energy to sustain play, learning and growth; higher Medium Chain Triglycerides (MCTs)—a quick source of energy to help children maintain healthy body, achieve better height and have appropriate weight. Plus it has the vitamins and minerals that meet the 100 percent Recommended Energy and Nutrient Intake of Filipino children.

GEMALINE Georgeos: "Being a dietitian is like giving people a manual on 'how to drive their own car.'" PHOTOS BOBBY MANALO

GIGNADOG and her assistant Carly Wilna at the Pediasure press launch

Ortigas Foundation holds cultural festival

THE ORTIGAS FOUNDATION will hold Mapagyabong Mind, a week-long event that will feature talks, workshops, exhibit and storytelling session related to arts and culture, history, environment and literature. Events include "Pinate, Sinipasan," an ecology exhibit by Lizo Reyes, Feb. 15-March 18; Creating a Climate for Change: A talk by Yeb Saño of WWF-Philippines, Feb. 18, 6 p.m.; storytelling session by Adonis Wade, Feb. 20, 10 a.m.; Ati-Pick: A Meet-n' Poem on Mindful Publishing, Feb. 20, 3-5 p.m.; Echo Tales at

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PGH holds art auction

MORE THAN 60 artworks are up for auction to raise funds for indigent patients at Philippine General Hospital. The PGH Medical Foundation Inc. (PGHMFI), in partnership with Lifestyle Asia, will hold the art benefit at Manila Polo Club on Feb. 18 at 6:30 p.m.

Dr. Gregorio Alviar Jr., president of the non-stock, nonprofit organization, is upbeat about the fund-boosting event. "Despite the economic situation in the country, people remain generous," he says of the artists who donated their works for the project and the different sponsors who are moved by the plight of indigent patients. "The proceeds will go to the Charity Drugs Medical Fund, which provides medicines, medical and surgical supplies, and special laboratory tests for those who cannot afford." This is their 3rd biennial art auction in support of the charity fund.

Among the participating artists are Arturo Luz, Ramon Orlina, Benny Wenceslao, Geo Alfon, Lito Cansino, Manuel Baldemor, Romulo Olazo, Socorro Santiago, Angel, Fenfen and Michael Cacho. Nikki Coseteng, Jerry Araza, Michael Elumba, Ramon Diaz, Arne Pastrana, Lydia Velasco, Nestor Medina, Roger Sen Miguel, Hermi Santa, Jun Ere and Phyllis Zabellero.

There will be live and silent auctions. Hosts for the evening are Tito Dip and Nicky Manigsaca.

Main sponsor of this event is EM Concord. Other sponsors include GMA, Serendipity, Mercator, Megaflash and Station of Bookstore.

THE ART BENEFIT will be held at Manila Polo Club on Feb. 18, 6:30 p.m.

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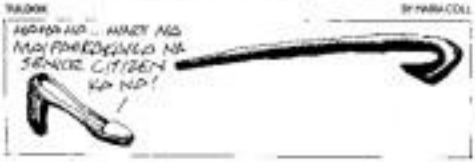
TULOOK By Hana Coll



BEH By Daniel Shelton

KISO MACHINE By Hanz Abrera

SHERMAN'S LAGOON By Jim Toomey

HOROSCOPE

By Francis Cruz

YOU BORN TODAY You're very fun, but you wear best less in and with life, despite this. You thought-provoking and inspiring. You're someone charismatic which you do very well. You are curious or does while you are working alone might impress bosses, parents, teachers and VIPs today. Treat your pet to donuts.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19) Because you're in a collective mood today, you'll enjoy interacting with others, especially in group situations. Younger people could be stimulating for you.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) Some parents that's cautious this season or does while you are working alone might impress bosses, parents, teachers and VIPs today. Treat your pet to donuts.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) A conversation with a friends could be very enlightening today. You might discuss religion, politics, foreign cultures and personal ideas. There's so much to learn!

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) Some aspect of your private life or perhaps your private business or something that you share with someone else, could come out in public today. Surprises or a love might learn something.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22) This is a great day to discuss new ideas with partners and close friends, especially about joint ventures. Your ideas could be greeted with enthusiasm or you might be inspired to make plans or something having to do with collaboration and sharing.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22) If you have some ideas about how to improve your health today, give them some serious consideration. New information about how to feel better can come your way.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22) This is a social day! Invitations to upcoming events, parties, the theater and social occasions are likely to arrive. New dating and/or couple activities (including those who might make your day!

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21) Some issues regarding your money today. They will be more specific. Family discussions are emphasized but not today, because people are ready to share their feelings.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21) This is a great day to learn something new. It's another exciting, thrilling, artistic, entertainment or sporting activity in any area.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19) Take your conversational ideas. This is the kind of day where you can fly to the end of your realm. Your intentions are good, so you should listen to them.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18) Money is in your way today. You may have to be more aware of your communication with others, especially females.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20) Any kind of habitual thing today, whether it's an appointment or work today. You have an amazing knack of knowing exactly where to look. You're very "tuned in".

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to yesterday's puzzle

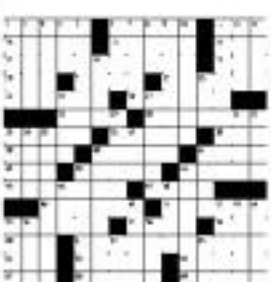
4	1	3	8	6	5	9	7	2
2	7	8	1	9	3	5	6	4
9	5	6	4	7	2	1	3	8
1	6	5	3	2	7	8	4	9
3	4	7	9	8	6	2	1	5
8	9	2	5	4	1	3	2	7
5	3	4	6	1	9	7	8	6
6	8	1	7	5	4	6	9	3
7	2	9	2	3	8	4	5	1

Concepts Sudoku By Dave Green

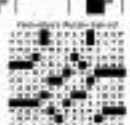
	7	4	3					
9				2		4	1	
3			8		9			
2		6		8	3			
	1		7	5		3		
		3	4		6	1		
	6			3	8		4	2
	3					8	7	
						5		

Difficulty Level: ★★★

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



Yesterday's Puzzle Solved



BUILDING BLOCKS. Mother-of-pearl and pearl formations shaped like perfect circles

Common Philippine materials make eye-grabbing installations

FLOWERS from woven and twisted rattan is also a Cora trademark.

Mother-of-pearl displayed as an orchid—leave it to Rachy

By Margie C. Enriquez
Correspondent

ARTIST RACHY CORA CHARACTERistically punctuates his assertions with a chuckle. His bright and chirpy disposition can be quite infectious.

This is also the feeling one gets upon seeing his exhibit at the National Museum Annex, dubbed "Structures," a pun on his penchant for extraordinary displays or artworks with huge visual impact. In keeping with the spirit of the National Arts Month, the show reflects his perpetual mission—elevating the common Filipino artistic or material in compositions of style and flair.

Like many artists, Cora's inspiration is self-created, although derived from his environment. He recalls his childhood fascination with buying little birds outside the church; the joy of eating mayas or sweet basil; the sight of laundry women sitting in wooden slings with their tin cubes and the seamless banaba garden.

These images are kept in his memory bank, to be retrieved for later use.

He gravitates towards textural elements, squiggles, vivid colors such as red, fuchsia and orange, and metallics...which recur in his works. While his arrangements initially appear architectural (hence his tag—"floral architect"), they are a paean to nature—for his subtle weaves into realistic tangles of grass roots, feathered leaves revealing their veins, ashened coconut ribs and shavings of wood.

Cora's creative drama by using scale is not very grandiose and significant. Instinctively, he uses large objects or combinations that make a room seem bigger than it actually is.

Take his series of "Grandiflora," abstractions of white honestly orchids with wooden heads against a background of Cora's trademark sides—red. They are mounted on 4-ft by 1-ft stainless, about the size of a Filipino.

A series of tall metal flowers rising from its *base* bulbs, gracing an issue, makes a powerful statement at the gallery entrance.

MUCH! Cora: "I just want to enjoy life through my art"

"GRANDIFLORA" SERIES. White phalaenopsis with black wooden heads and squiggles for accent

BUTTERFLY orchid formed with strands of mother-of-pearl and freshwater pearl

Subdued arrangement

Height is again emphasized in "Natural Jazz" with the use of oversized golden cylinders filled with raw bamboo blooms, amid an arrangement of unique handmade flowers and feathered leaves. In "Raffia Heat" tall abaca fiber stalks wound with ribbons and adorned with orange fish and green flowers form wood shavings sinks for a subdued arrangement.

Cora doesn't rely on upright elements alone for works. In "Volcano," he stacks up tiered metal squares, spelling out home in the interval. His newest original birds and roosters made from fossilized leaves inject fun into the composition.

As tribute to the bingo game, he created an installation made of serum bingo baskets lined on a bamboo bar. They are adhesive with flowers—cocoate from woven reeds, adorned with bingo chips as pollen.

He cleverly presents his jewelry pieces like pastel gems. The phalaenopsis reflection, made of mother-of-pearl, is displayed like most orchids—on hanging pots with egg shell birdbaths. The geometric, slim shade of mother of pearl, are made of discs fillers filled with green moss.

To underscore scale, his outdoor installation is a 15 ft by 20 ft bamboo frame, covered with fuchsia cotton sticks, all twisted and weaved. "Sala Ito" is his attempt at conceptual art, where the idea of interaction and intermingling is more important than the material or the process itself.

Cora doesn't put a price tag on his works, since they're not commercialized art. To him, it's just a way to make people look at life in a different, albeit humorous, way.

Do-it-yourself With Ariane Bautista and Marissa Lapa

How to set up popcorn bar for a party

USE MINI colored cups or shot glasses to serve the popcorn.

FOR YOUR NEXT PARTY, SET UP a mini popcorn bar. Popcorn is economical, easy to prepare and deliciously irresistible.

Cheese flavors. As a dessert bar, opt for caramel, vanilla, butter or chocolates. As an appetizer or snack bar, a savory mix of lemon butter, garlic parmesan or white cheddar is tempting. Display flavored popcorn in clear glass containers. Personalize each glass container using a ribbon band that matches the color of your theme. Print out labels for each flavor and stick them on the glass containers using double-sided tape, or put them in frames and position in front or beside the containers. Include scoops and napkins. Use mini colored cups or shot glasses to serve the popcorn.

Buy ready-made flavored popcorn at the snack section of a grocery or at the mall. Chemistry, Tatters and Chef Tony's offer a variety of flavors.

But if you choose to do it from scratch, here are a few simple recipes:

Parmesan Garlic

½ c popcorn kernels
2-3 tbsp butter, melted
½ tsp salt
1/4 tsp garlic powder
dash of black pepper
½ tsp dill weed, optional
¼ c finely grated parmesan cheese

Pop corn in an air pop per or on the stovetop (follow directions on package). Toss the popped corn with melted butter in large bowl. If you'll pop the corn in a pan (with some oil), decrease the amount of butter called for in this recipe.

In small bowl, combine salt, garlic powder, pepper and dill. Sprinkle. Toss lightly to mix and remove small lumps. Add Parmesan cheese to the bowl and mix.

Pair seasonings with popcorn and serve.

Caramel Corn

2-3 quarts popcorn
Salt
4 tbsp butter
1 1/2 c brown sugar
1/2 c water
½ tsp baking soda
1 tbsp vanilla (this makes a lovely vanilla caramel flavor)

Pop popcorn and put small amounts of salt. Melt butter in pan. Add brown sugar and stir until mixed. Add water. Mix until boiling stage and cook for 5-10 minutes until mixture hits soft ball stage (Put a few drops in glass of ice water until it can form a soft ball.).

Remove from heat and add vanilla and soda. Stir while it goes puffy. Drizzle over popcorn and lightly stir. Allow to cool. Serve.

Chocolate Popcorn

Popcorn
Vegetable oil or olive oil
Salt

PRINT out labels for each flavor and stick them on the glass containers.

Bag of semi-sweet or white chocolate bits

Pop popcorn.

Spray large bowl with cooking spray. Place popcorn in bowl.

Melt chocolate until smooth. You can use a double-boiler to melt the chocolate, or put it in microwave for 30 seconds on medium power, stirring after each interval.

Use a spoon to drizzle the melted chocolate across the popcorn. Mix the popcorn around with the spoon to evenly distribute the chocolate. Then place the baking sheet in the refrigerator for 30 minutes to allow the chocolate to harden.

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"PAINTED Dreams," Manuel Baldemor's interactive painting with 26 special children

Singapore concert to raise funds for Pinoy special kids

JOES COVE, a CENTER FOR children with learning disabilities, and Espesyal Pinoy, a support group for children with special needs, will stage "A Special Blend of Love," a benefit dinner and concert, on Feb. 20, 6 p.m., at the Intercontinental Singapore Grand Ballroom at 80 Middle Rd.

Julia Abueva, one of "Operatic" Pitch's Talented Kids, will perform. On the same evening, Manuel Baldemor will unveil his mural, which he had created with 26 special children. His other works will also be exhibited.

Proceeds from the concert-exhibit will go to the poor special children of the Developmental Pediatrics Section of the Philippine General Hospital and Espesyal Pinoy's Resource Center. Tickets are at 100 Singapore dollars.

Time to deal with drivers using cell phones

THE CONSUMER
Linda B. Bohlke

THE LAND TRANSPORTATION Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) should start thinking of effective and practical ways to discourage drivers of public utility vehicles, especially taxicabs, from using mobile phones while on the road for the safety of commuters.

I see more and more drivers talking on the phone or sending text messages. The distraction could cause them to fail to notice that traffic lights have changed or that other vehicles have started to move.

Perhaps LTFRB can have one hotline that commuters can call or text to report drivers who use mobile phones while on the road. Of course, most drivers do not have their IDs prominently displayed so commuters can just give the name of the taxi and its plate number. If the time and date when the driver was observed using the phone are specified, the LTFRB can probably nail the lawbreaker after getting the driver's phone number(s) to verify if the complaint has basis.

From what I know, motorists can issue calls and/or messages sent from a particular phone at any given time by silencing the cell sites that transmitted the call or message. The LTFRB and/or cellphone companies can think of penalties for erring drivers.

Home work

Last week, I wrote about the apparent prevalence of respiratory ailments, with people everywhere coughing or sneezing a cold.

Many of these people would probably prefer to stay home and rest until the coughing or cold is gone but they do not want to take a day off if it means their vacation or sick leave is deducted by a day or two. So, as long as they are strong enough to travel and stay in the office for the number of hours required of them, they would rather go to work. This, of course, means there is the risk that they will spread the infection to coworkers.

The Washington Post reported recently that some American companies were making it possible for employees, who were feeling under the weather, to stay out of the office without using up leave credits they would rather reserve for more serious health problems or more important activities.

After all, with all the modern technology available, workers need not be physically present in the office to do the work they are supposed to do. They can even participate in important meetings and other group activities from the comfort of their homes.

The Post said, in the story by E. Jean Harriss and Yhat Q. Abe, the mood to review sick leave policies was prompted late last year by the H1N1 flu strain scare and the onset of the flu season in the United States.

Some companies, fearful that sick employees would bring the flu virus to the office, updated their rules to allow employees to stay home with full pay—unheard using leave time—for H1N1-related absences. By reason, according to the story, led companies to come up with strategies to accommodate sick workers while keeping the business running. With flu, even the common variety, being so contagious, it made sense to let sick employees stay home to prevent spreading the disease.

In the past, some American companies, especially small businesses, balked at the idea of paid sick leave because it meant additional cost if they had to get somebody to do the work the absent employee was supposed to do, the news report said. But modern rational logic is allowing an employee to do his/her work without going to the office.

Chaos at the airport

Wesley Boyle Jr., a Bethlehem from Canada, was greeted by chaos at the arrival area of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport. He said both people and vehicles picking up arrivals caused a major traffic jam. When he left, he noted that toilets in the departure lounges were ill-maintained and did not have sufficient water.

"We can do better than this. Airports are gateways for world visitors. Can't we afford to repair broken toilets? Or brighten up the whole airport? We can replace this bulbs with CFLs (compact fluorescent lights)," Boyle said.

The Bethlehem found the Manila domestic airport "world-class, so huge and clean" and wondered why it was not used as an international facility.

Send letters to The Consumer, Lifestyle Section, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 19/F Chino Roces Ave. cor. Makati and Yague Sts., 1200 Makati City; fax (632)719-5141, or e-mail lbohlke@inquirer.com.ph.

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ENTERTAINMENT

Lira Emerie G. Velarde

Cockfight film wins in Hawaii

MEXICO. Kamon and Nanie Laurel Delgado's "Sabungero: Cebu Cockfighter" has won the Aloha Aerobatic Award for Excellence in Film-making, which it will receive in the 2010 Honolulu International Film Festival, to be held in Hawaii on April 23. The indie film stars Joel Torre, Nicky Davao, Leo Martinez and Mark Gil. Reynel Gan (Negro Jr.

CHEER FACTOR

HER FAMOUS humor and gore fly out the window as Maria is proclaimed "PBB" winner. Diary on Page E2L

Juday gives it back to Jamby: Regrets

By Reynel San Diego Jr.

SEEMS THE FEELING IS MUTUAL

Actress Judy Ann Santos told the media during a press conference that she also organized an evening presidential sojourn Jinky Madrigal, who ran for a Senate seat in 2004 and won.

During the known-sponsored presidential debate held on Feb. 6, Madrigal said she regretted giving licence to campaign for her at this time. "I have seen the folly of my ways and I will not repeat that because I don't believe that we should perpetuate her (with the help of a thick) ledger."

Santos said, "It's good that it came from her because we feel exactly the same way."

The actress said she got upset when she heard about the politician's comments. "I thought she was sincere... I thought she believed that I was an effective endorser, that I was able to convince at least three people to vote for her everywhere on mind."

Source is among the top 10 celebrity endorsers in the country, pitching for products as diverse as shampoo (Pantene), mobile phone service (Sun) and feminine wash (Lactacyd, which was launched Monday).

She took offense at the insinuation that stars endorse politicians for nothing more, or less, than a lucky-charm for.

As for the reason that Madrigal failed to compensate her properly for the 2004 campaign, Santos just shrugged: "If I either not comment on that. When it comes to money matters, it's best to talk to my manager, Allie Lorenzo," she told the newspaper over an email.

She said she learned a lot from this controversy. "I am more picky now... before campaigning for anyone."

"I AM more picky now," says actress Judy Ann Santos.

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MOVIEWORLD

ROBINSONS MOVIEWORLD CINEMA MOVIE GUIDE

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SHOW TIME

Rico J as 'Loverboy'

RICO J. PUNO, Maura Jilson and Snooky Zuñiga perform in a show dubbed "Loverboy" tonight, 7 p.m. at Mirkohan, Mon Avenue, Quezon City. Call 372-2898.

Young balladeers

Also performing at Mirkohan, tomorrow, are young balladeers OJ Mariano and Ash Jamaica. Mariano won at Bet Now Artist in the 2008 theme Awards. Jamaica sang the "Inquiring version of the "Mama Loves" theme.

'For His Kingdom's Cause'

Christian Bautista, Isabelle, Sam Concepcion and Carlo Orosa headline the show "For His Kingdom's Cause" on 9/6, 28, 7 p.m. at the concert ground of MarioCoco Hotel and Leisure Park in Cavite.

Proceeds will benefit the children's ministry and outreach center of New Life Christian Center Bacoor, Cavite.

The show, with inspirational musical numbers, also features newcomers Mikaela Hernandez, and the Enchanted Dancers, who are volunteer teachers of the Sunday school of the children's ministry.

Call 0928-7569795 or 0920-5809820.

Juday ...

From page E1

anyone, I'll make sure I know that person really well... from head to foot."

He said she first met Madrigal just before the 2004 election. "He did so informal on the court. Since she was running [with] the party of Imee, Bongbong Mar Jr.], I also campaigned for her."

She is not interested in waging a word war with Madrigal, though. "I value my name and reputation in the business," Judy said, adding that she has yet to hear from Madrigal after Feb. 6. "I have no idea if she is trying to reach me, but if she wants to... who am I to turn my back on her?"

Asked if she is considering a candidacy this election, Judy said, "I'd rather keep that to myself or discuss it only among friends. Or maybe if I'm in the grocery and someone asks me to vote for, I'll be open about it. But I'd rather not campaign openly."

Her requirements? "I will vote for someone who will help the country progress, someone who can solve simple problems, like traffic."

She said that the Comelec ruling on joining celebrities and media personalities to go on leave if they want to campaign was "slightly" unfair.

"Why single out actors? We also have the right to express our opinions and support whomever we want."

Love nest outs secret couple

By the Entertainment staff

IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A simple home pictorial with Hunky Model for a gloozy.

But eagle eyes noted funnel snapshots—all over the house, for we mean, of Abbi Long-Time Manager Turned out, the place belonged to LTM, not HM. They were secret lovers until they parted ways.

Another love nest

Feisty Manager offered Cute Bird's pad to media, also for a home pictorial.

Again, it turned out, the pad that Cu claims with a sibling was FM's. No wonder FM threw a fit upon finding out that girls often visited. Especially because it's no secret that CUte FM's hap-ray.

Fall-out fears breakup

High-Profile Manager let go of Lover-Actor-Talent because the guy felt for a Glamorous Beauty.

It seems the love affair was co-existent with their business relationship: HFM allegedly convinced friends in the biz to nominate LAT's customers with their companies. Plus, HFM asked fellow managers to reject LAT who's currently looking for representation.

Too close an encounter

Mole wants to know: Is Politician/Host a closet gay? That's because rude spotted PI-1 in a remote down south at the same time as Hunky-Actor.

Perhaps it was just coincidence and PI and HA were not on holiday together. Then again, PI was previously linked to another boy, Cute Celebrity.

And Aside spotted PI cycling Brazilian nude models in a club in the tropical paradise.

Crystal-clear character

Aunt Sides, Crystal Clear Wisher spokesperson, on why Lorna Tolentino has been the product's endorser since 1997 (Her eyewear was recently renewed): "She has consistently projected a clean, wholesome image. She has excellent work ethics, loves her work and values trust and friendship. We are honored to continue our business relationship with her."

Tap of the talk shows

For those who missed last weekend's gabfest on TV, cited why we are warned, if we are warned.)

■ Claudine Barretto to Mark Anthony Fernandez's recent apology: "Nung nasa edge kasi, lahat nun ay TV. Iyon'n ibang iba sa nasasa edge kasi ng isang tao lang sa isang lugar."

CLAUDINE: "Not OK, Mark."

LT: Crystal clear character

■ Regine Velasquez on spending Valentine's Day with Ogie Alcasid:

"Baka mag-Ogie na lang tayo sa gabi. Di pwe wala kaming ma-reserve." (Did we miss the wedding?)

■ Regine on Ogie's major no-nonsense:

"Kasali sa kanya ang mga anak ko. Ayaw niyang hiwalay sila. Ayaw niyang ako ang isa." (Aw, how?)

■ Carmina Villaroel on wedding plans with Zoren Legaspi:

"Hindi naman talaga nagpapakasal ang mga tao dahil nagmamahalan sila. Ang sinabi nung mga nauna, sabay sila nagpakasal. Hindi ako ako naghahanap ng isang mga anak ko.... Hindi ako mam-demand sa kanya ng kahit anong bagay. Kung ano ang kaya niyang ibigay, ano ang kaya niyang gawin para sa akin, iyon ang ibigay ko sa kanya. Kung ano ang kaya kong gawin para sa kanya, iyon ang gagawin ko. Kung ano ang kaya niyang ibigay sa akin, iyon ang ibigay niya sa akin

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GANGSTA rapper Ronaldo Morata of Tondenan applauded by Mord jans. Far right, poet Michael Correa reads his literary laugh ... and think. Below, musician JP Hernandez played alternative instruments, like snare drums.

MMTA MOVIE GUIDE

METRO MANILA THEATERS ASSOCIATION

NOW SHOWING

Walter Mart

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THEATRE MALL

PROMENADE

BASIBAS SI

So much to do . . .

a gangsta rapper strained their stiff, with unsettling ef fect.

Though hardly rating 'em, poets Tess Antonio, Michael Correa and Kinding Josef drew rhymes and playful remarks right into the hearts of their youthful audiences.

'Tribu' rap

And there we found Ronaldo Morata, a 21st member of the acclaimed indie movie "Tribu," about gangs in Tondo. He left the small crowd tongue-tied with engaging an the spot verse set to a groovie musical track.

He had met him earlier with the rest of the "Tribu" cast. He had since become a father of two kids, he said, and to make some money he now sold plastic water in Divisoria.

(It's a wonder he hasn't lost his gift.)

And that was it for us, while my happy escort swayed behind us to one more beat...the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra at the Production Design Center Salcedo behind the CCP.

Our whole day spent there, and I didn't even find the puppet shows, storytelling, culinary fair and cooking demos, arts and crafts booklets market. Next year, I have to be more economic

EXPERIENCE THE DIFFERENCE

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MARCH 14 • SUNDAY • 9AM

PRESS PRESENTATION

Opening This Week

ALLEN Dizon in "Mahirap"

Queer Love Fest

Directed by Adolfo Alix Jr., Joy Almarjales, Mark Meredith Bienedicto, Bobo Bobadilla, Joel Lamangan, Quintin Mariatorres, Cito Pablo, Butterfly Quo, Anastasia Sedillo

In a week-long festival at the Robinsons Galleria, the Philippine Independent Filmmakers Cooperative presents such gay-themed titles as "Tinikbook," "Nag Love sa Balay ni Juan," "The Thank You Girls," "Heavenly Touch," "Walang Kwenta," "Barrio and Juan," "Sophia," "Quack-Up," "Erase," "Bon" and "Bench Seat."

Pariwisat

Directed by Antoon Bonifacio; stars Sidlee Cabras, Christopher Gumiran, Abdie Espinosa, Jeff Ednave

Gay filmmaker (Cabras) is murdered and the investigation results in four conflicting versions of the incident as seen by the people he loved and loathed.

Marino (Call of the Sea)

Directed by Paul Sta. Ana; stars Allen Dizon, Cecille Garcia, Jun Nardo, Mark Tan, Vickie Rosa, Marvi Alvarez, Krista Sotelo, Ara Mina

Seaman Sergio (Dizon), away from his family for seven years, grows close with Cecilia (CPVM) who experiences the same difficulties. This digital drama sheds light on the lives of Filipino seamen, melding pertinent problems.

Invictus

Directed by Clint Eastwood; stars Morgan Freeman, Matt Damon, Tony Kgoroge, Patrick Mofokeng, Matt Stern, Julian Lewis Jones

This story recounts how the South African rugby team achieves the seemingly impossible: Win the World Cup and unite a fractured nation.

Edge of Darkness

Directed by Martin Campbell; stars Mel Gibson, Damian Young, Ray Fitzsimons, Danny Huston, Shawn Roberts, Bojana Novakovic

Boston cop (Gibson) avenges the murder of his daughter and uncovers a dark, clandestine world.

Couples Retreat

Directed by Peter Billingsley; stars Vince Vaughn, Jason Bateman, Jon Favreau, Kristen Bell, Kristin Davis

Couples with marital problems go on a therapeutic holiday in an attempt to save their relationships. (Exclusively in 3D/Cinerama)

Big challenge in Gabby, KC movie

GABBY CONCEPCION IS EXTRIE about working with his daughter KC Concepcion in their first movie together, "I'll Be There For You."

What was the hardest scene they did together? "Reactions required for the scenes when we see each other for the first time were the opposite of what happened in real life," Gabby said. "Super super hirap pumalsik! Pero kabulgktawan ang mangyari sa movie. Make-up umawit nang malapit kung mangin kayo. That was a big challenge at siyempre."

What's one particular moment he will never forget? Asked his "team mate" KC was there for him? "When dad died, she was one of the first who came to the wake."

I happened to be there when KC arrived at the chapel. It was such a touching moment to witness their embrace as tightly without saying a word. The gesture father and daughter will forever be in each other's corners.

***

Are Mylene Dizon and guitarist Ian Cruz back together? I chanced upon them at Bistro Cleo in Greenhills in rather boring celestial. Perhaps they were just hanging out as known mutual friends. Or does their facial cues not just with a closure face but also a new phase in their whatchamacallit relationship?

***

I immensely enjoyed being at Nonoy Zuñiga's Camp Fire. It was a "Disneyland" for sports buffs with much football, beach basketball, hip-hop, talisman frisbee, beach volleyball and yoga lessons, all for only 500 bucks. Nonoy's wife Cecile and "Pokwang" (the one, laughing, "Guys will polish and will photos ano ko na lang ang

Dolly Wood

Dolly Anne Carvajal

Are Derek Ramsay, Jason Rogers and Rayver joined the fun.

Check out the Camp every Saturday (9 a.m. - 5 p.m.) and its celebrity guests at the Fort Open Grounds until March 27. Winning teams will flyto Boracay for free.

Derek was limping because he's still recovering from his knee operation. "I got to take it slow for a few weeks," he says. "It's quite an ordeal for someone like me who's so active. My body always wants action."

He is looking forward to a trip to Africa with his "fit" Angelica Panganiban, and their friends to watch the FIFA World Cup.

Angelica doesn't understand football completely but in time I'll teach her about it," he says. "I just will her to watch if the ball has crossed to the other side of the field. We will watch one or two games only. Ayaw ng matrid kasi ang sakit-sakit ng (laughs)."

But the joy they have is priceless.

Estrella and Chope reliving each other about "three days." Or also a "honeymoon" for "P-day" (the cops laughing). "Guys will polish and will photos ano ko na lang ang

value and as ill get the feel of it some time."

It was asking me to join her shoot some balls. I told her that I would rather basketball, only zero-degree. She teased me, "You should try to learn a degree for a bit!"

We both giggled like crazy when we agreed that, when it comes to dowers, we should only have one of each kind.

***

I asked Shelbie Ocampo about the real state of his relationship with Shina Dobrunz. "As long as she's happy," he quips, "I'm happy." In every relationship, if we can say so, longer be happy together, the least we could do is be happy for each other.

***

Dingdong Dantes sent me this text regarding his sentiments about the Comelec's order for celebrities campaign for candidates on leave:

"The Comelec rule prevents artists from participating responsibly in a very important political exercise. It even deprives some artists the chance to earn an income only because they are working as a candidate's campaign. Worse, it forces many artists like me who are volunteering (to support their candidates), even shouldering our own expenses, to devote hours to making a decent living and making a difference in a supposedly democratic exercise."

KC AND GABBY Concepcion

"I appeal to the sense of reason of the Comelec and the Supreme Court to declare by the present issue and what I perceive as a flaw in the law. I request legal luminaries to guide us. Most of all, I call on my friends and fellow workers in the industry to consider our common stand."

There you have it. The Do's and Don'ts of Dingo!

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- The BIGGEST opening for a Sony/Screen Gems release.
- The BIGGEST opening for a Nicolas Sparks novel (out-grossing "The Notebook" and "A Walk to Remember").
- The HIGHEST weekend box-office for the year 2010 at USD 32,400,000.00 (as of Feb.5-7).

2ND WEEK

DEAR JOHN

AMERICA's SECOND HIGHEST-GROSSING FILM AFTER "AVATAR" (Jan.29-31) 3-Day Opening Weekend

THE MOST DANGEROUS MAN IN AMERICA JUST GOT DEADLIER

OPENS TODAY

MEL GIBSON EDGE OF DARKNESS

FROM JAMES BOND DIRECTOR MARTIN CAMPBELL CASINO ROYALE

OPENS FEB.24

PREPARE FOR GLOBAL SWARMING

INFESTATION

IT WAS a day of folk dancing and more at the CCP "Pasinaya 10" on Feb. 7. The Andres Bonifacio Elementary School (Lower Bonifacio) was among the numerous outdoor performers.

So much to do, so little time

Or what happens when the CCP says, 'Pay what you can, see all you can'

By Bernie G. Velarde

IN ONE DAY, I TOOK IN ballet, classical guitar music, modern (dance) by Ronnie, the short film, "Wat Floor Ma'am?" by Mike Sandejas, Filipino poetry and gangsta rap.

Had I the power to (re-)create, I would have done twice better but still missed over 60 other things at "Pasinaya 10," the Cultural Center of the Philippines' Open House festival on Feb. 7.

Best part was, my much younger companion (which should explain the lump into gangsta rap) and I parted with just P50 each. (Enough P20 was all that was asked of us to get into the all-day action.

More than 80 shows featuring some 2,000 artists were presented by the CCP resident companies and affiliated groups, including the National Arts Match.

Every square foot of the CCP was alive, including the front lawn, where 1,000 dancers gathered in seven for "Banggang Banggang Bamboo: The Nothing Showdown." For the spectators, many of them balikbayans, this was worth the half-hour exposure to the sun.

The alley, too

Even the peninsula areas and the alley in front of the Production Design Center became venues for at least 16 performances, all previews of forthcoming shows.

This was how it went for us, super Grups. At the bachelor entrance, we were issued paper bracelets and a schedule.

Right after the trobling show down, we galped down sandwiches and sodas, then queued up at the Main Theater door to watch two champs of last year's National Music Competitions for Young Artists, Wenessa Samantha Hagen (ballet and Franco Napisondo Maigue (guitar).

Then off I ran to see Ballet Manila in the Rubia gang Francisco Reyes Aquino at the Lower Basement... while my companion ended up at the Tanghalang Ignacio Gimenez at the Upper Basement for "Dekada," featuring the Philippine High School for the Arts (PHSA) promo troupe.

Ok, so, time was long at the LB. If I got to the door at till, I figured, there would be no tiers seats. So it was back to Upper Basement for me, to queue up early for "Wat Floor Ma'am?" in Tanghalang Manuel Conde. My companion was already there, panting. He barely made it to "Dekada," he said.

Mike Sandejas' short film has a cast of two, one a Bulan Padilla type, the other an Imelda Marcos. It takes place entirely in an elevator bank, including back stories of Manual Luzon, beyond that, you labidet Pin 2. Section: but this ended to the Tanghalang Ignacio Gimenez at the Upper Basement for "Dekada," featuring the Philippine High School for the Arts (PHSA) promo troupe.

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Mike Sandejas' short film has a cast of two, one a Bulan Padilla type, the other an Imelda Marcos. It takes place entirely in an elevator bank, including back stories of Manual Luzon, beyond that, you labidet Pin 2. Section: but this

smell...and the pungent view was an instant who couldn't have been more than 18 months old!

After "Wat Floor ..." we plan was to proceed to the Bulwagang Fernando Amorsolo Abajad ng Sining on the 4th level, for the Philippine Madrigal Singers' "Lessons Sing in 15 Minutes."

Run, again

But my sweet said a school friend of his had strongly recommended the character troupe Stunt Unit, also from PHSA. So we ran did again, this time to Tanghalang Huseng Batute, seven flolly on the same floor.

This one was packed more than the others because the theater was very small and intimate. Discovering it was a very pleasant, if belated, surprise.

Then up to the Bulwagang Juan Luna on the third level we went for "What Floor Ma'am?" Everyone sat on the floor as young proponents of alternative music and performance poetry artists and